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|---|---|
| Egypt | MR1 |
| Turkey | MB1 |
| Iraq | MH1 |
| Syria | MD1 |
| Lebanon | ME1 |
| Historical Palestine | MF2 |

/For an account of the organization of agriculture and forms of land tenure and an historical summary of changes in agricultural systems and methods in the countries of the Middle East, see 66: Bonné, M1 Middle East, category 116 as follows: Egypt - pp. 127-129, 192-196, Turkey - pp. 129-130, Iraq - pp. 130-133, 189-192, 202-203, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine - pp. 133-135, 188-189, 203-204./

full time winter and summer. This is one of the reasons why most projects on the Khabur have been failures. The overhead costs are very heavy in relation to the land available.

The Government has an irrigation project partly in operation which will irrigate when completed an area of about 100,000 dunums (25,000 acres). Other projects are under study but their execution will be postponed indefinitely since the Government lacks the necessary capital.

To summarize, it would appear that not only all cultivable lands in Jazirah are already cultivated, but that farmers, in search of lands, have started using marginal lands with insufficient rainfall, and unless the price of cereals keeps at the level of last year there will follow in the coming two years a gradual decrease in the area planted, with heavy losses to individual farmers.

## POPULATION OF JAZIRAH

During Turkish rule and up to the French occupation, Jazirah was a wasteland controlled by Bedouin tribes whose submission to the Turkish law was nominal.

### I. The Arab Tribes

The tribes, dominated by Shammar, ruled the land and spoiled it, frustrating all attempts at agriculture. They lived on sheep and camel breeding and charged tribute from merchants for protection, each tribe within its boundaries. Moslem and Christian families from Mardin and Nisibin owned lands around what is now Kamishli, Amuda and Dirbassiya, and they traded with the tribes, buying their wool, samneh, and hides and supplying them with their needs and credit. The ownership of land for agriculture seems to have been incidental to the commercial activities of these families.

The tribal boundaries established during the Ottoman rule are still effective. Shammar claims the right of grazing from the Iraqi border at Tal Koshak to Tal Alu and south to Fadghami on the Khabur. There is another small concentration of a Shammar branch around Derbassiya known as Shammar Ezzor.

The neighbor of Shammar to the west is the Tay tribe. Its lands extend from Kubur el Bid and Kamishli south to Tal Brak. The tribe took to agriculture relatively early and in its area are some of the best lands of Jazirah.

But proofs of their increase are the hundreds of new villages tilled by Kurds and built by them in the regions of Kubur el Bid, Amuda, and Derbassiya.

The Kurds like the Arabs, follow a tribal organization. Starting from the east, the Koshar tribe, mostly nomadic but recently turning to agriculture, dominates Jazirat ibn Amr, i.e., the region of Deink and Ain Diwar. The Koshar border Shammar on the south and they are on fighting terms because Nayefz Pasha, chief of the Koshar, killed the brother of Dham, chief of Shammar. Next to the west is the Shitiya tribe around Kubur el Bid. This tribe is old in the region. Its members are Arab in their dress and, in contrast with all the other Kurdish tribes, they speak Arabic as well as Kurdish. Its lands lie west of Shammar and more within the Tay region but its relations with both are friendly.

Qamishli, which is a Tay region, includes villages of the Pinar Ali tribe. But west of Qamishli comes a solid bloc of 100% Kurdish villages extending for more than sixty kilometers and reaching to the west of Dirbassiya practically uninterrupted by any Arab village. This area is undoubtedly one of the most fertile of Jazirah. Within it, the Dakkuriya tribe is centered around Amuda, then follow the Kikiya around Dirbassiya, and the Milliya from Dirbassiya to Ras el Ain.

The Kurds are considered very good farmers. They plow and plant with mules but they rent combines for the harvest. This is because they have learned that combine harvest is more economical. The Kurd is also greatly praised for his character. He is truthful, honest, and upright in his dealings. He keeps his word and the merchants of the Jazir trust him completely. He is also clean in his home and in his dress, and though Bedouins reproach him for not being generous in his house, his standard of living is higher than the Bedouin and his villages are much cleaner.

The Kurds owe allegiance to their Agha who takes the place of the Bedouin Sheik. But this relationship is weaker than is the case of the Bedouins. The successive Governments did not give the Agha grants of money or similar authority over his tribesmen in the manner of the Sheik. The Kurds were considered from the start sedentary people subject directly to Government laws. That is why most of the Kurds own and till their lands in their own right.

6: Government of Syria--25 G-4 (no date)1952 MD1 Syria MD1

## LAND OWNERSHIP IN JAZIRAH

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At the beginning of the French Mandates, more than 95% of Jazirah lands were public domain, and it is difficult to understand the land situation now without a study of the laws governing the acquisition of public domain as enacted by the Ottomans and partly amended by the French, and which remained in effect till January 31, 1952, when decree-law 96 was issued.

### I. The Land Laws Prior to January 1952

The law recognized two categories of public domain:

1. Lands registered in the name of the Government in the same way that a private owner has his lands registered in the Department of Tabo, or Land Registration Department. The Government holds deeds for those lands.

2. All unoccupied lands, waste lands called "dead lands," in Syria which are not registered in the name of anybody and for which the Government holds no deeds.

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The first category of public domain is very rare in Jazirah. Suffice it to say that ownership of these lands can be acquired by public auction sales, or by renting them from the Government after a price has been fixed, and paying the price in yearly installments while doing the improvements specified in the contract or sale. The operation is known in Syrian law under the same name of "rent with a promise of sale."

The second category of public domain is by far the larger. And the law provided different methods for acquiring it suited to the small peasant and to the big farmer.

The the small peasant, the law, accorded him five hundred dunums which he could own freely without any payment provided he informed the competent authorities of his intentions and obtained in advance an authorization from the Department of Registration. He could then go ahead and cultivate the area allotted to him, and after 10 years, he could obtain legal title to it, without any payment.

This method did not enjoy great favor with the peasants of Jaz- 423
irah for several reasons. In the first place, the ignorant peasant, 425
whether Bedouin or Kurd, found difficulty in applying for the advance authorization and in fulfilling the formalities required for receiving it. Secondly, the peasant aspired often to a larger area than that allowed to him by this method. Thirdly, the peasant did not trust the Government, from which he was used only to oppression and corruption during Turkish rule. He was afraid that by the end of the ten years he would not be granted the promised land. Fourthly, the peasant did not trust his neighbors, his Sheik, or his Agha. He was afraid that during these ten years and before he received the deed for his land one of them would manage to drive him away and get the land for himself.

For all these reasons combined, the peasant wanted a way that enabled him to receive more than 500 dunums of land, that rid him of the necessity of applying to Government officials, and that put in his hands an undisputable title to his land in a reasonably short time.

All these desires were satisfied if the peasant followed the second method of land acquisition described by law. The law provided that, without previous authorization, anyone can acquire title to waste land if he cultivates it and pays to the State so much per dunum. No limit was set on the area which a farmer could acquire in this way. The State was interested in extending agriculture and offered encouragement to those who reclaimed land. The area which a farmer could own in this way was limited only by his ability to cultivate and plant. He could at any moment ask the appropriate officials to make a survey of his cultivated area, ask them to fix a price per dunum, pay the price, and get his deed in the first year of cultivation. In the nineteen forties, the price per dunum was usually set at LS50.

II. Partnership in Land B[illegible] the Tribesmen and the Tractor Owner

To avail himself of these advantages, the peasant had recourse 425
to the city dweller owner of a tractor. The usual situation was that 427
a group of peasants have occupied a large area of about 10,000 dunums within the boundaries of their tribe, of which they were able to cultivate only some 2000. They offered the tractor owner half the 10,000 dunums on condition that he brings his tractor to the village

and cultivate all the area. Usually the tractor owner took upon himself also to pay all Government dues and the price of all the land as fixed by the Government, and to hand the deeds for the 5000 dunums to the peasants in one or two years.

In this way, the peasants got 5000 dunums instead of the 2000 they were able to cultivate by their own means, they received their deeds in one or two years instead of in ten, their partner from the city became responsible for helping them resist any encroachments on their land from the Agha, Sheik or neighbors, and they received their deeds free from any dues.

Around 1944, when demand for land increased, peasants began receiving money from their city partners besides all the obligations assumed by him and mentioned above.

The French wisely strove to encourage agriculture in Jazirah, and and finding that the procedure used for the acquisition of land was long and complicated, formed a Special Committee and empowered it to grant land and issue valid deeds while abrogating some of the usual processes of law. Some lands were distributed in this manner and the French were accused of using their influence to the benefit of their political sympathizers. But in general, the Committee did a good job of stabilizing and legalizing the ownership of some lands.

The great majority of the land owned by tractor owners in Jazirah was acquired in partnership with the peasants. A few of the inhabitants of Mardin and Nisibin had titles to lands from the Ottoman Government. In rare instances, a few individuals went to the Land Registration Official in Turkey and bought from him forfeited deeds covering very large areas. But in general the titles in the hands of property owners in Jazirah were acquired in the manner described above.

Because there was no survey in the Ottoman Empire, Ottoman land laws, adopted and amended by the French and applied to Syria, considered that the boundaries mentioned in the deed were the determining factor in case of dispute, and that the area mentioned in dunums was of no importance since the surveying services did not reach all parts of the country. For this reason, all deeds in Syria give the boundaries as exactly as possible, and give an approximate estimate of the area in dunums, except where surveying has remedied the situation.

III. Lands With Title Cover Only 30% of Jazirah

It should not be understood from the above discussion that all the lands of Jazirah are occupied by persons having title to them. Perhaps as much as 70% of the lands are occupied by persons claiming ownership but having no legal title. And here resides the great problem of Jazirah which continues to retard its development and prosperity. 423 185

There is nothing that can stabilize conditions in an agricultural society, increase confidence, improve credit, diversify the types of cultivation, increase property values, and encourage the improvement of land by long-term projects of irrigation and farm construction, like a secure and stable system of land ownership.

It is the misfortune of Jazirah that successive Governments since Syrian independence have not only ignored this basic fact, but have done everything in their power to make the stabilization of the land problem in Jazirah more remote.

Before the beginning of 1952 land registration in Jazirah suffered from all the delays, expenses, corruption, and hindrances prevalent in other parts of Syria. Moreover, as a frontier zone, land registration was subject to an authorization by the Chief of State, and in the last three years registration of land acquired through cultivation for a period of ten years was stopped by decision of the Council of Ministers.

The governing idea behind all these restrictions is that individuals are usurping the public domain illegally. While this may be true in some cases, the measures taken to correct the situation are out of proportion to the problem at hand and are applied not only to usurpers out to land owners of good faith as well. The result is that three-quarters of the lands of Jazirah belonging mostly to peasants and medium owners are unregistered.

IV. Decree-law 96

Decree-law 96 starts with this idea of correcting the usurpations of the public domain, and adds to it the concept of social justice as exemplified by the policy of encouraging small land holdings and dividing the large estates. 423 185 656

A. Contradictory Policies of the Government

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The decree is interesting in its application to Jazirah and it seems that the Government there follows two contradictory policies diametrically opposed and antagonistic to each other. On the one hand, decree No. 510, dated March 23, 1950, and decree No. 80, dated January 23, 1952, facilitate the importation and distribution of powerful agricultural machinery among the farmers in general and those in particular of Jazirah. The use of agricultural machinery goes hand-in-hand with the extensive cultivation of large areas of land to make their employment economic. On the other hand, and surprisingly, only eight days after the promulgation of the decree for the distribution of agricultural machinery, decree-law 90 dated January 31, 1952, prevents the farmer from owning or renting (in its interpretative communique) more than 1500 dunums in Jazirah an acreage which does not lend itself to economic tractor cultivation.

The decree has been in operation now for seven months and its application should have vindicated the two principles on which it depends, viz. 1 to correct the usurpations of the public domain, and to divide the big estates among the needy farmers.

Assuming that the policy of the State is to encourage small ownership of land to be tilled by the farmer using cows or mules, and that the importation of heavy agricultural machinery was a mistake not to be repeated, the logical procedure by the Government would have been to establish simplified processes and register in the name of peasants pieces of 1500 dunums each to which they have a right both in the old and the new law. The Government has had ample time during these eight months to enforce its own decree-law and register tens of thousands of 1500 dunum pieces and give their users legal title to them. Had the Government done that, it would have found the problem greatly simplified. The Kurdish and Bedouin family has in general three to four adult members working on the common land. According to decree 96, each member has a right to 1500 dunums. The Government would have to grant them extra land to reach its quota.

B. Size of Land Holdings in Jazirah

The point is that, had the Government proceeded in this manner, the practical result would have been the stabilization and legalization of the present small and medium ownership.

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This, according to the following table borrowed from Gib Report, page 20, would have legalized the situation in 57% of the Jazirah lands, leaving 9% as public domain, and only 34% not complying with the terms of the decree.

| Small Holdings Less than 10 hectares | Medium Holdings 10-100 hectares | Large Holdings Over 100 hectares | State-Owned Lands |
|---|---|---|---|
| 56,000 | 528,000 | 343,000 | 96,000 |
| 5% | 52% | 34% | 9% |

Instead, the Government's only contribution to the solution of the land problem was to prohibit entirely the registration of any land from January 1952 to the present time.

If the Gibb statistics are correct, and they are presumably taken from Government sources, the land reform in Jazirah contemplated by decree 96 concerns only 34% of the region's entire area.

In dealing with this portion of Jazirah, the Syrian Government has to decide on its agricultural policy. It must make up its mind whether it wants to divide the big estates, with or without compensation, and distribute them in small lots to farmer families using mules, thus increasing the population of Jazirah greatly, so that its production of wheat will not much exceed its local consumption, and depriving Syria of the income derived from its present yearly export. Alternatively it must decide that Syria wants to increase its exports of wheat by extending the use of agricultural machinery whose effective use requires holdings of more than 1,000 hectares.

Coming back to the discussion of the 34% of Jazirah lands in holdings of over 100 hectares, the Government should have proceeded immediately, after the promulgation of the law, to their surveying and delimitation to get a clear picture of the situation. Without venturing into exact statistics, the following description is to the point. It endeavors to show that excessive land ownership is limited to relatively few individuals and that the problem is better solved by the Government by considering each case on its merits. The problem of the Government is further facilitated because the tribal Sheiks claim that they hold the lands for their tribe and not for themselves. The Government should have asked the Sheiks to proceed to the distribution of these lands under its supervision.

423 The large holdings are owned by the Agha of Koshar around
47 Deirik, the Sheiks of Shammar from Tal Koshak to Kubur el Bid and south to the Rad, the Sheik of Tay and several of Tay subdivision chiefs, Asfar-Najjar family of Qamishli, the Aghas of the Kurdish tribes (three in number), and two Sheiks of the Jubur. This list is not exhaustive but it is true that not more than fifty individuals in Jazirah have holdings of more than 5,000 hectares each. And since the great majority of them are tribal chiefs, the logical solution is to ask them to distribute these lands according to the laws in force since the Ottoman rule. No new legislation is necessary to fulfill the two aims of distribution of the public domain to needy peasants and the division of the big estates.

Such a solution will not mean that every estate will be only 1500 dunums but it will mean that perhaps 80% of Jazirah will be in holdings approximating 1500 dunums and some 20% in holdings of 10,000-15,000 dunums for tractor cultivation.

C. Shortcomings of the Decree

423 The basic defect of decree 96 is that it erred in diagnosing
656 the real problem of land ownership in Syria. As the United Nations
433 Economic Survey Mission for the Middle East aptly described the situation (part I page 34), "In the Middle East, most of the population--perhaps as much as 90%--lives virtually on the margin of subsistence. But while maldistribution of income obstructs economic progress in a variety of ways, it is secondary to the basic problem in each country of grossly inadequate output in relation to the total population. This is the central fact of economic life in the Middle East." Thus the real problem facing the Government in Jazirah is not that a few people own large tracts of land (though some of them do and should be controlled), but whether the present type of cultivation is not working for a better national economy than small holdings will be able to do.

This criticism of decree 96 does not mean that land abuses do not exist in Jazirah. Undoubtedly they do. But it is a long way between admitting this and trying to correct it by dividing the land indiscriminately into 1500 dunum lots.

The shortcomings of decree law 96 are numerous and without discussing them in detail since the law is being amended, it is necessary to recognize some of them.

423 In the first place, the law amounts in fact to confiscation of
676 property because it arbitrarily abolishes rights of individuals gained
433 over the land through the normal processes of established law.

Secondly, it allows a uniform area for every farmer whether he uses tractor or mule, and whether he allows dry cultivation in Jazirah or irrigated farming in the Euphrates or the Khabur. It is evident that an irrigated area of 1500 dunums is more than adequate even for a large farmer while the same area is too small for tractor dry farming.

Thirdly, the confiscatory provisions of the law are not limited to lands recently acquired from the public domain, but cover lands for which deeds have been in the hands of the owners for decades. Decree 96 achieves this by reversing the stipulations of the preceding laws and by stating that in unsurveyed lands every title should be limited by the area mentioned in it and not by the boundaries.

Fourthly, if social justice is the aim, why should the law be limited to control of the ownership of land and not extended to control commercial and industrial property as well as real estate in cities and cash money? Further, how can the law treat on the same basis five hundred dunums planted to orchards or olive trees and a neighboring area of the same dimensions planted to wheat?

## V. Land Ownership Along the Khabur

471 There is more concentration of land ownership along the Khabur that in theother parts of Jazirah, though the concentration is less apparent because the cultivable lands are smaller.

In the north, around Ras el Ain, the Shashan tribe dominated the country. South of them are the Assyrian holdings. Around Hassakeh, some Christians have bought lands from the Juburs, but south of the town and down to Shaddadah, the Jubur Chiefs of the Milhem family own or control both banks of the river. They own all the naqourahs and work their lands by renting it to the members of their tribe on conditions described in the next chapter. One hardly finds a Jubur who is not of the Milhem, or a stranger from inside Syria, who owns property in the Jubur region of the Khabur.

Lately, the Milhem have begun renting land to irrigation projects by pumps. But unlike the Kurds and Tay people of upper Jazirah, the Milhem have never agreed to enter into partnership for the ownership of land.

621 241 penetrated more deeply into the settled land gradually changed from nomadic pasturage to sedentary agriculture. They grew wheat and other cereals wastefully and by primitive methods which had not changed for many generations; sometimes using the remnants of the Roman irrigation system, but more often relying upon the rain and the sparse streams; producing mainly for subsistence, but selling what surplus they had in the towns. After the early Islamic period there was an uninterrupted decline in the agricultural productivity of the country. Its causes were mainly political: the exactions of tax-collectors and the depredations of civil war.

619 721 221 The constant immigration of new Beduin tribes prevented the maintenance of a stable agricultural life in all except the coastal regions. The Beduin always looked upon the settled land as a source of plunder, and gave no willing allegiance to any Government, or to any law except their own customary codes. Periodically the peasants' work was set back by the incursions of the nomads, and the constant threat of raids served as a discouragement from enterprise. The margin of cultivation was in consequence always shifting and uncertain; it moved eastwards into the desert when the Government was strong enough to hold back the Beduin or induce them to settle on the land, and when the Government was weak the opposite process took place.

621 427 651 423 In consequence of the change to agriculture, the relationship between tribesman and tribal chief was replaced by, or rather transformed into, that of peasant and landowner. Syria was a feudal country. Until the seventeenth century the lords had held their lands on condition of performing military service; but later the feudal army fell into disuse, and a new feudalism grew up based upon tax-farming. The Pasha of the province was normally the chief tax-farmer; he was required to transmit an annual tribute to Constantinople, and in return was allowed to squeeze as much as he could out of his subjects. Beneath him there was a hierarchy of feudatories, farming their districts or villages on similar terms. In some districts they were Ottoman officials, but in others the right of collecting taxes was given to the local or tribal chiefs, who were virtually autonomous. This was especially so in mountainous districts like Lebanon, Jebel Druze and the Alawi district.

621 423 The feudatory's tenure was precarious, and his power

threatened by the avarice of his superiors, the encroachment of his equals and the insubordination of his vassals. The size of domains and the fortunes of noble families were always changing. A certain stability was, however, given to the system by the practice of turning lands into religious trusts (Waqfs) for religious or charitable objects. Families which were the custodians of such trusts, which benefited from them in other ways, or which by tradition filled important religious positions, had a better chance of retaining their wealth and influence than those which had become rich and powerful through tax-farming.

At the bottom of the feudal structure were the cultivators, who were serfs of their immediate lords, owing them a variety of feudal dues and oppressed by them. The usual practice was for a village to hold and cultivate its land in common; small individual holdings were the exception.

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Sometimes the local dynasts were adventurers, ruling by the sword alone and without any support from local tradition. But often their rule was firmly based upon local sentiment and loyalty: a localism which was reinforced by tribalism and, in those districts in which compact religious minorities were settled, by sectarianism. This was especially so in Lebanon; but over the whole country it is true to say that the local community was the real political and social unit. There was no effective consciousness of an Arab nation, and 'Syria' was no more than a geographical expression; nor was there any sense of responsibility for the Government, which was generally regarded as essentially hostile, an instrument of oppression.

Side by side with the life of the countryside, there went on the distinctive life of the Syrian towns. The immemorial stopping-places on the trade-routes—the ports, the bazaar-towns and the caravan-towns—kept something of their greatness in the Ottoman period. There was still a lively transit-trade; Syrian wheat and fruit still went to Egypt, cottons and silks to Europe. The town-populations were Arabic in language, and their ways were deeply influenced by Arab customs; but their social structure differed from that of the countryside, and was determined by their peculiar economic function. They were naturally more open to influences

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1



production. A reform in the system of land-tenure would also help. In some parts of Lebanon small free-holdings are to be found, but in Syria large estates are the rule, and 'métayage' is perhaps the most common form of tenancy. The 'musha'' system of communal ownership, under which holdings are periodically re-distributed, is also widespread. In the past twenty years the Mandatory authorities have made progress with land-survey and the settlement of title, and with the division of lands held under the 'musha'' system But greater tasks remain. Large tracts of the country are still in the possession of a small number of landowners, who for the most part are not interested in improving either the productivity of their lands or the standard of living of the workers. The creation of a free peasantry, by the break-up of the large estates and the appropriate use of the vast state-domains, is still in the future. The facilities for agricultural credit are very inadequate; there are practically no co-operatives and very few agricultural banks, and in consequence the peasant is in the clutches of the money-lender. The tax-system is regressive and weighs heavily upon the cultivator.

A special problem is created by the Beduin, of whom there are over half a million. Their economic function is the breeding of camels in the steppes and desert regions where agriculture is impossible. They are divided into tribes of which the most important are the various Anazah tribes—the Ruwala, the Feddan, and the Sba—in the steppe and desert south and west of the Euphrates, and the Shammar in the Jazirah. Traditionally contemptuous of the settled population and of all government, in the past they have been a serious obstacle to agriculture; but during the last two generations or so the Government has made a serious attempt to control their wanderings, and t prevent their raiding each other and the settled regions, while allowing them to preserve their tribal law and organization. At the same time their economic position is being undermined by the decline in the demand for camels. This makes it the easier to induce them to settle on the land. In the Jazirah, in the Hauran and elsewhere tribes can be found which are abandoning the wandering life. They take to breeding sheep as well as camels and become semi-sedentary; then they begin to cultivate the land and in time become wholly sedentary, thus continuing

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria M01



of them indeed were better treated than the bulk of the population.) Special regard was paid to their needs and traditions, and opportunities were given for the development of their self-consciousness and self-respect. The effects of generations of inferiority cannot be wholly wiped out in the course of twenty years, but in those years Syria and Lebanon made a certain advance towards individual equality as the democratic countries of the West understand it.

Among the most urgent of the country's social problems is that of the archaic system of land-tenure. No direct assault, it is true, was made on the position of the great semi-feudal landowners. But the first step towards reform was taken by the establishment of a modern system of land-registration and the initiation of a land survey. Also the number of small freeholders was increased by the sale of public domain and the encouragement of the permanent partition of land held communally on the 'musha'' system.[1] In addition something was done to help foreign trade by the extension of harbour and other facilities.

A State system of schools was constructed almost from nothing; it is still very imperfect and not yet able to supply so good an education as is given by the best of the private schools, but at least it includes every grade of school, from primary up to the Syrian University in Damascus, an official institution set up in the early years of French Mandatory rule with the object of providing higher education in Arabic.

The foundations which have been laid are solid, but there is still much to be done before Syria and Lebanon possess even the framework of a modern society. Thus expenditure on public works and social services is still very small; the medical services are inadequate. No adequate census has been taken, although there has been a very elaborate and complete one in the neighbouring territory of Palestine. Labour legislation scarcely exists. Most serious gap of all, only inadequate measures to improve agricultural conditions have so far been adopted. Little provision has been made for agricultural education. Although excellent plans for irrigation have been drawn up, few of them were put into effect until the Allied occupation of 1941. The authorities had done little to provide facilities for agricultural credit, and nothing to encourage the formation of co-operative societies.

[1] See Chapter V.

14:International Bank S-5 (1954) 1955 MD1 Syria MD1



241 311 people could claim title to "empty" land by simply occupying and cultivating it for a period of years. Legislative Decree No. 135, although never applied, was enacted to halt this unregulated expansion by making all unoccupied land state domain and thus subject to exploitation only with a prior permit. This legislation implicitly recognized that the amount of land that could still be put to the plow was steadily shrinking. Nonetheless the mission encountered a widespread impression that agricultural land resources were virtually limitless. Official estimates that there remain somewhat over 3 million hectares of land available for cultivation appear to support this impression. However, such an estimate is at best only a rough guess. It undoubtedly includes much land which is marginal from the standpoint of fertility or rainfall. It should be frankly acknowledged that there is little or no reliable information on this subject. The mission itself gained the impression on its travels that the amount of land still available for cultivation without irrigation is extremely limited. Here and there in the Jezireh, for example, cropping has already pushed forward into marginal land. Even though good yields may be obtained on such lands in seasons of abnormally heavy rainfall, farming would normally be very hazardous.

Certain conclusions must be drawn. The first is that irrigation will need to play an increasingly important role in the expansion of land under cultivation. The second is that a careful inventory and classification of the land still available should be undertaken in order to determine how it may be most effectively utilized and what must be done to make it productive. The final conclusion is that there is need to work out policies and programs for the exploitation and settlement of such good land as remains.

241 423 3. *Ownership of the means of production in agriculture is very unevenly distributed, resulting in wide disparities in income.*

Land ownership is by no means equally distributed. There are many landless peasants, while large landed estates, some exceeding several hundred thousand hectares, predominate in the provinces of Hama, Homs, Aleppo and the Jezireh. One estimate indicates that 38% of the total area of privately owned land was in holdings of over 100 hectares and only 19% in small holdings of 10 hectares and less. Reliable figures on the distribution of land ownership will be available only upon completion of the cadastral survey now in progress. Of the area surveyed by the end of 1952, however, 49% was held in properties of over 100 hectares and 16% in properties of more than 1,000 hectares. These proportions, however, are

14:International Bank S-5 (1954)1955 MD1 Syria MD1



likely to decline somewhat when the survey is completed for the Hauran and Djebel Druze where small peasant ownership predominates.

Water for irrigation is supplied chiefly by merchants and wealthy landowners who have the means to install pumps. Similarly, the ownership and operation of modern agricultural machinery are primarily confined to large operators in the Jezireh.

Ownership of the critical factors of production carries with it the ability to demand a large share of the output. In areas where rainfall is inadequate the pump owner, who is frequently not the landowner, can exact from 45% to 60% of the crop simply for the water he supplies. Where labor is plentiful and rainfall adequate, the landowner can get up to half of the crop simply by allowing others to cultivate his land. On the other hand, in the Jezireh land is plentiful by comparison with labor and rents for only a 10-15% share of the crop. Here the owners of tractors and combines control the central factor of production and can command the lion's share of the output.

The small cultivators have no capital or access to capital that would enable them to acquire more land, better machinery and livestock, pumps and other means of production by which to raise their standard of living and make themselves independent. Nor are they organized in cooperatives to undertake these things collectively. Even the larger farmer frequently has great difficulty in getting necessary capital on reasonable terms.

One of the most important objectives of an agricultural program is therefore to provide an adequate volume of credit on equitable terms in order to make the needed means of production more generally accessible. The organization of cooperatives to facilitate group action among small farmers should be another aim. No single peasant, for example, has enough resources to sink a well or install a pump, but a group of peasants could pool their resources to this end. Finally, it would appear vital to conserve the good land remaining in state domain for the purpose of settling landless peasants and Bedouins and thus gradually increasing proprietorship.

4. *Despite the existence of many large properties, land is predominantly tilled in small holdings by tenants or peasant-owners who earn a rather precarious livelihood.*

Large-scale exploitation prevails only in the Jezireh and to some extent in Aleppo where land is farmed in big units with mechanized equipment and paid labor. Even the large estates are for the most part farmed in small units by sharecroppers who are tenants at will, seldom cultivate the same

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241 piece of land for long and thus have virtually no incentive to improve the
423 land. Many large landowners do little beyond collecting their share of the
427 crop, leaving relations with their tenants in the hands of agents. They
[452] often stake their tenants to seed, livestock or implements or tide them over with food and clothing until the harvest comes in; and in the absence of adequate credit institutions they thus serve a useful function. In most cases, however, such assistance in cash or kind is given on terms which conceal extremely high rates of interest. In other cases credit may be furnished without interest by landlords conforming strictly to the Islamic code. It must be recognized also that some and probably a growing number of large landowners take a more active interest in the management of their land and have been instrumental in introducing new crops such as cotton. Progressively minded owners of large estates, when interested in improved crop rotation and methods of production, can become the means for more rapid advancement of agriculture.

241 The small peasant-owners and sharecroppers, who carry on most of the
423 agriculture, produce primarily for their own consumption. Their output is little influenced by market prices, for they must produce to eat and with the balance they buy such simple necessities as they can. Most of them wrest a bare living from the soil and are chronically in debt to the merchant, the professional moneylender or the landlord. Unable to bring their produce to the market or to wait for better prices, they must accept the price offered to them locally for whatever they produce in excess of their own needs. They till their land with methods hallowed by time, and their equipment for the most part consists only of a pair of draft animals and a wooden, iron-tipped plow.

Any program of assistance to agriculture must obviously focus largely on these cultivators. It must show them how to improve their methods of production, provide them with better seeds, equipment and animals. Through the organization of cooperatives and the provision of adequate agricultural credit it should help to free them gradually from excessive dependence on the landlord, merchant and moneylender. It must also pay attention to tenancy problems with the objective of establishing greater security of tenure, providing more incentive to cultivators and achieving a more equitable sharing of the produce of the land.

423 5. *The uncertainty and confusion surrounding land titles is another obstacle to land improvement.*

The uncertainty surrounding land titles has been largely inherited

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from the Ottoman Empire. Conflicting land grants have often been made in the past, and many claims to land rest upon grants of dubious validity. Titles frequently have not been perfected or entered into official registers. Even title deeds which are registered often contain conflicting or vague specifications regarding the area and the boundaries of the property. A considerable amount of land is still held in common village ownership and periodically reallocated among the villagers who accordingly have little interest in the permanent improvement of their changing allotments.

Programs to determine and delimit titles through a cadastral survey and to convert village common land into individual peasant holdings have been under way for several decades, but progress has been painfully slow.

6. *Agricultural yields are considerably below potentialities.*

Agricultural yields in Syria generally do not compare unfavorably with those in most other countries. Cereal yields tend to be about 10-20% below the world average and substantially below those achieved in Europe, but cotton yields are well above the world average and now approximate those in the United States. The output per hectare for virtually all crops is better than that in the rest of Asia.

This general picture does not, however, justify complacency. The relatively good yields have no doubt been largely due to the fact that the frontiers of cultivation have been pushed steadily forward into new and virgin lands. Without this rapid expansion of the area under cultivation, productivity would probably have declined. The mission noted evidence of soil depletion and falling yields in certain areas which had been continuously farmed over many years.

With the diminution in the supply of available new land, Syria will in the future have to rely much more on an improvement in yields to maintain the rise in output. The potentialities unquestionably exist. Fallow is still virtually the only method employed to maintain and restore soil fertility. Thus at least a third of the arable land lies idle each year. Animal manure is almost wholly used as fuel. The use of fertilizers is still in its infancy; in 1953 only 11,171 tons were imported. The practice of green manuring is virtually unknown. Insects and diseases still take a heavy toll. Much higher yields can be obtained through better selection of seeds and varieties, improved crop rotation and better soil preparation and cultural practices.

7. *Animal husbandry is not practiced as an integral part of agriculture and is still on a low standard.*

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time to time, however, spot analysis will also be required to carry out special programs to improve soil fertility.

*Cadastral Survey*

Aerial photography should assist considerably in accelerating the cadastral survey work which was first initiated in 1923 but was still only 45% completed by the beginning of 1953. It is clearly in Syria's interest to finish the cadaster as soon as possible so that the uncertainty surrounding private property rights may be ended at long last and the extent of state domain may be clearly determined. Similarly, it is necessary to expedite the lagging program for converting *mucha'a* or village common land to individual peasant ownership. Experience with the accelerated survey for the Jezireh indicates the need for additional measures to speed up the work. This survey, originally scheduled for completion in the spring of 1955, is now unlikely to be finished before the end of 1956. Insufficient funds, shortages of trained personnel and cumbersome procedures have all contributed to delay this vital survey work. The mission urges that all possible measures to expedite the program be taken. Among the measures that might be considered are the contracting of necessary ground surveys to qualified private firms; the delimitation of properties in certain areas solely by means of aerial photographs rather than by ground surveys; and the possibility of shortcuts in the protracted legal procedures involved in the determination of titles.

*State Domain*

The aerial, cadastral and soil surveys outlined above will for the first time provide the government with approximately accurate information on the area and quality of state domain. At present the government claims ownership of 1,417,571 hectares of allegedly cultivable land of which 551,473 are leased for cultivation. This total, however, excludes the unoccupied or "dead" land (*mawat*) which was assimilated to state domain by Legislative Decree No. 135 of October 29, 1952. Nor does it include the land which may be "recaptured" by the state under other provisions of the same decree. For instance, this decree specified that prior occupation of land which had not yet been sanctioned by the acquisition of title would be recognized only up to 200 hectares per member of the occupier's

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471 immediate family. It also provided that in adjudicating title deeds in
423 which the area derived from the indicated boundaries of the property was greater than the area mentioned in the deed, the boundaries would govern at least to the extent that they gave each member of the titleholder's family a minimum of 200 hectares. The mission urges that these provisions, which have apparently not yet been applied, be enforced as rapidly as possible. Their application would inflict no undue hardship, and would increase significantly the amount of revenue-earning state domain. Above all, it would put at the government's disposal more good land to be retained as a reserve for the ultimate settlement of landless or virtually landless peasants. Much of the land now left to the state is too marginal for successful settlement.

471 Careful management of state domain is necessary to ensure that the
423 state derives from it the maximum revenue and that land not really
427 suitable for cultivation is reserved for pasture or forest. The government is not equipped at present to exercise adequate supervision. Land is often tilled without authorization, thus depriving the government of revenue and often encouraging the cultivation of land which can be expected to produce a satisfactory harvest only in years of exceptionally high rainfall. Until cultivable land is required for settlement, it should be leased, as at present, to private operators who have the necessary machinery to till it. Thus land in the Jezireh which is recaptured under the provisions of Legislative Decree No. 135 might well be leased to those who now cultivate it, so that existing units of exploitation are not disturbed until the land is needed for distribution. However, current rentals for state land, even though they have been rising in recent years, still seem unduly low. Judging from private rental arrangements prevailing in the Jezireh, for example, the state should be able to charge an average rental of at least £S 5-6 per hectare instead of only a little over £S 3 as at present. In this way the government can add to the funds available for financing development.

*Forestry and State Domain*

137 The management of state domain should look also to the preservation
459 and improvement of forest areas on government land. Syria has unfortunately been almost entirely denuded of forests. Although some 448,000 hectares are listed officially as "forest", 348,000 hectares consist either of

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To meet the cost of this program over the next five or six years the mission suggests that additional funds of £S 500,000 be made available to the forestry service.

*Settlement of State Domain*

The employment of state land for the establishment of peasant proprietors is already declared government policy. Article 22 of the 1950 constitution stipulates that "The State shall distribute among landless peasants, at a small cost to be paid by instalments, sufficient land to secure their livelihood"; and decrees issued by the Minister of Agriculture on November 1, 1952 and January 15, 1953, provide for the sale of government land in parcels of 50 or 10 hectares, depending on whether the land is irrigated.

The immediate need for settlement arises from certain localized population pressures and from the growing desire of the Bedouins to adopt agriculture. Population pressures are most marked in the provinces of Latakia and Djebel Druze where, according to rough estimates, the amount of cultivated land available per person is less than 50% and a little over 60%, respectively, of the average for Syria as a whole. The reclaimed land in the Ghab and the Roudj should help in particular to relieve the overcrowding among the agricultural population of the Alaouit mountains in Latakia. According to the Ministry of the Interior, the Bedouins number about 150,000, half of whom, however, are said already to be engaged in some form of settled agriculture. Many Bedouins apparently tend to squat on unoccupied land which they cultivate more or less sporadically and often with extremely poor results. For them the availability of good land in such a province as the Jezireh is of paramount concern.

The mission has given special attention to the problems involved in settling reclaimed and irrigated areas and of undertaking certain experimental settlements in dry-farming regions. The government has not yet drawn up settlement plans for the Ghab and the Roudj, although this task is becoming urgent, particularly for the latter. For the settlement of the Bedouins certain initial steps have been taken. The government has set aside and divided into allotments 100,000 hectares in the Radd area of the Jezireh and is in the process of dividing another area of 50,000 hectares in the same province. Part of the first area has already been allocated to Bedouins but is being leased to large operators for three years in order to

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build up a sufficient fund to finance the actual settlement. The mission did not obtain sufficient information on these plans to appraise their soundness, but suggests that they be reviewed in the light of the considerations that should, in its opinion, govern such settlements.

The amount of land to be allocated per farm family in any settlement must depend on the yield of the land and the capacity of the cultivator to till it. The prospective yield must be such as to enable the farmer to earn a decent living without, however, being so high as to create inequities. The size of the allotment must not exceed that which the cultivator can manage with the labor of his own family and with the equipment at his disposal. For irrigated areas the appropriate allotment would be 5-10 hectares where land is good to average. In areas adjoining urban markets where intensive cultivation of vegetables is possible, the allotment could be below 5 hectares; and in areas where the soil is rather poor, more than 10 hectares may be necessary. Settlements for Bedouins in dry-farming areas should be organized on the assumption of 50 hectares per family. The mission believes, however, that it would be unwise to allocate all this land at once, since no family could be expected to cultivate such a large parcel. The initial allocation should be about 25-30 hectares, and even of this a part might be put into improved pasture instead of being cropped. The balance might then be put into a reserve which would be used for grazing and be available for allotment to farmers who show themselves especially capable, or to new families in the settlement. Such a pattern will make it easier for the Bedouin to accomplish the transition to settled agriculture, by enabling him to carry on his customary pastoral pursuits as he crops his land.

The land would have to be tilled with draft animals and the necessary supplemental tools, but a special effort must be made to provide the settler with more adequate draft animals and better equipment than are customarily employed. While the use of mechanized equipment would in general be impracticable, the mission does recommend that one dry-farming community be organized on a mechanized basis. Such a community is suggested quite frankly as an experiment to test the possibilities of mechanical cultivation by smallholders. Ideally, the necessary tractors, implements and harvesting machinery should be owned and operated cooperatively. In the beginning, however, the settlers would hardly be prepared for such cooperative action. The mission suggests therefore that the government establish the necessary machinery unit under the direction

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423 166 241 of a manager with experience in the operation and maintenance of mechanical equipment. In the first few years at least the services of this unit should be made available to cultivators at rates high enough to cover cost of amortization and operation. As and when the farmers acquire experience with machinery and develop a community spirit conducive to cooperative action, steps should be taken to transfer the equipment in whole or in part to cooperatives.

The government should utilize the opportunity afforded by such new settlements to raise the standard of agricultural practices above the average. A government agricultural worker or community leader should be assigned to each settlement. It cannot be expected, of course, that optimum farm practices will be adopted, particularly by Bedouin settlers. It is possible, however, to provide guidance and even, perhaps, to prescribe certain crop rotations. In the dry-farming communities wheat will obviously be the principal crop, but winter vetch and such legumes as lentils, chick peas and soya beans should also be part of the cropping scheme. From 5 to 10 hectares might be left fallow each year. Another 5-10 hectares of each farmer's allotment might well be put into approved pasture. Each settler should be provided with about 60 sheep which should give a return nearly equal to that derived from crops. For the irrigated areas much more intensive cultivation, with a minimum of fallow, should of course be envisaged. The emphasis should be on such summer crops as cotton, sugar beets, peanuts, maize, beans and vegetables grown in proper rotation. Here the use of fertilizers and insecticides will have to be especially encouraged. A few cattle should be kept on the basis of the fodder provided by some of the suggested crops.

423 166 241 361 Each settlement should be small enough so that the remotest farm would be no farther than an hour's walk from the village, and large enough to warrant the establishment of minimum community services such as a well, a mosque or church, a school and a community center. The first consideration is important only in determining the size of a dry-farming settlement and would point to a settlement with an area no larger than about 5,500 hectares. On such a dry-farming area 120 families, including 10 non-farming families, could be settled initially; and the total might ultimately be about double if the land first held in reserve as pasture were subsequently allocated to new families. Even a settlement of 120 families, with a total population of 600-720, could support minimum community facilities. For the irrigated areas, where land allotments would

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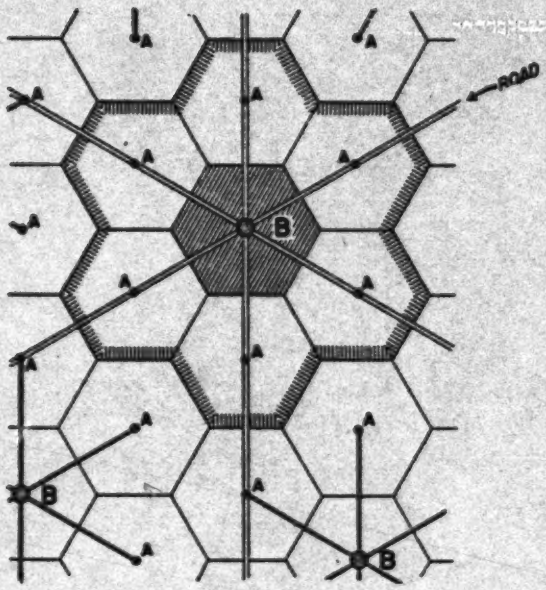
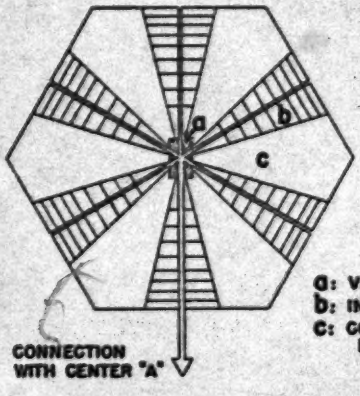



DIAGRAM 1
SCHEMATIC RELATIONSHIP OF DRY-FARMING COMMUNITIES




a: VILLAGE
b: INDIVIDUAL FARMS
c: COMMUNITY LAND FOR GRAZING

DIAGRAM 2
LAYOUT OF COMMUNITY "B"
(20 Hectare Farms)

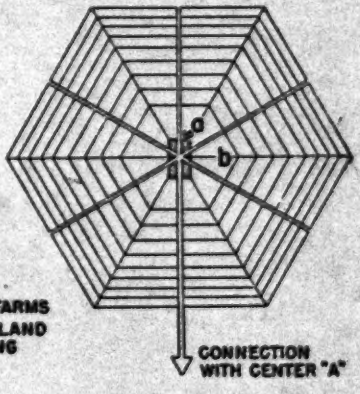



DIAGRAM 3
LAYOUT OF COMMUNITY "B"
(50 Hectare Farms)

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423 be much smaller, the minimum size of a community might be raised to
166 around 300 families, including some 30 non-farming families. Such a larger
241 community would economize capital invested in common services. Even
361 on irrigated land, however, circumstances might dictate the establishment of a smaller community with a provision for subsequent growth if the potentialities of the land warrant it.

A settlement should be laid out in such a way as to make access to farm land convenient and to fit into adjoining settlements of a similar type. For the dry-farming area settlement units shaped like hexagons would in principle be ideal. (See Diagrams 1-3.) In such a unit the farms could be laid out at an angle to six roads radiating from the center and parallel to the sides of the hexagon. Between the farms radiating from the roads the land initially reserved as common pasture would be located. One of the six roads would link the settlement with other communities. A number of hexagonal settlements would fit well together. It must be recognized, however, that modifications in this basic hexagonal unit will often be necessary, owing to marked variations in the quality of the soil or the topography, the relationship of the area to existing settlements and other factors. (For examples, see Diagrams 4-6.) In the irrigated regions the shape of the settlement will be largely determined by the layout of the irrigation system, so that the hexagon may well have to yield to the square as the more practical form.

In areas where a number of settlements are established the relationship of the new communities to each other and to existing settlements in adjoining areas must be carefully considered. For the Roudj, for example, the mission would suggest the establishment of about five communities, of which four would be purely agricultural and one would serve also as a minor marketing and administrative center and therefore be somewhat larger. (See Map 6.) A major center need not be envisaged in view of the proximity of the towns of Idlib and Jisr ech Chogour. For the more extensive region of the Ghab a similiar pattern can be contemplated; and the planning will need to be based on the assumption that Jisr ech Chogour, situated at the northern end of the area, will become the regional marketing and administrative center.

The mission strongly recommends the village-type of settlement. Any other type which would house the settlers on their own farms would not only be contrary to tradition, but would be destructive of community life and make it difficult to supply the needed community services. The village

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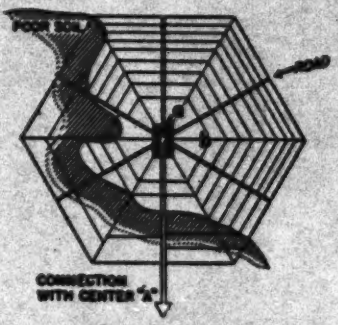


DIAGRAM 4
ALTERATION OF FARM DIVISIONS IN THE CASE OF VARIATIONS IN THE QUALITIES OF SOIL

a: VILLAGE
b: INDIVIDUAL FARMING
c: IRRIGATED AREA

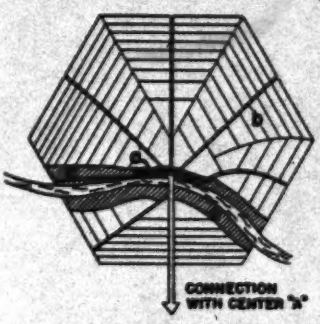


DIAGRAM 5
LAYOUT OF COMMUNITY WITH STREAM

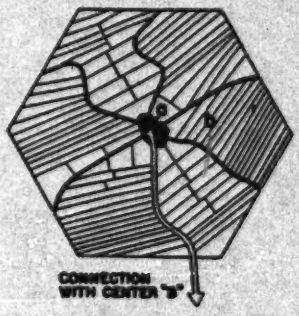


DIAGRAM 6
LAYOUT OF COMMUNITY WITH DIFFERENT TOPOGRAPHIC CONTOURS

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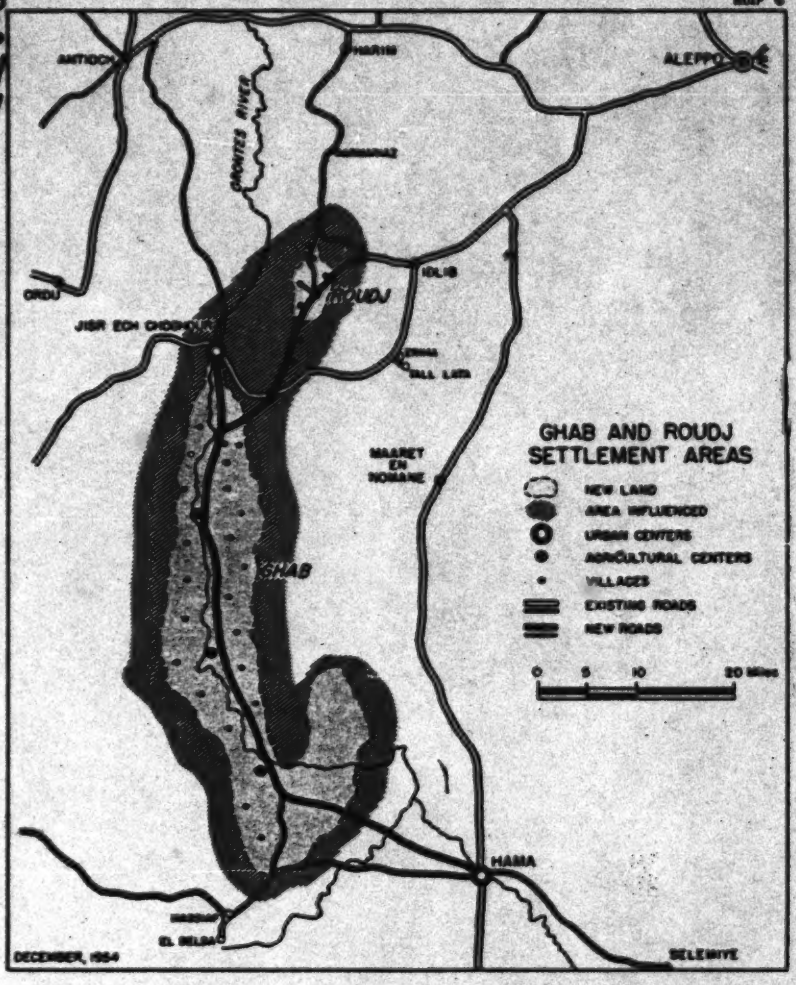
MAP 6



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should be located in the center of the settlement area and laid out along a rectangular pattern with the community facilities and open public places in the middle. It would be desirable to have the village surrounded by a small garden area and a belt of trees.

The settlement must, of course, be considered "model", but not in the sense that its standards and costs are so high as to render its general adoption prohibitively expensive. The settlers should be expected to contribute their own labor to its initial construction and the subsequent gradual expansion and improvement of its facilities. This will help to reduce costs and give the settlers a sense of pride and achievement in the establishment of the community. For example, the ultimate aim might be to provide a farm family with a 5-room house (3 main rooms, kitchen and laundry-lavatory), enclosed courtyard, storehouse and stables.[10] Initially, however, it would suffice to provide a 2-room unit without some of the elements in the final building. The cost could thus be kept to about £S 1,500, to which the settler might contribute £S 800 in the form of properly supervised self-help. Each farm family will need, however, a minimum sustenance allowance of approximately £S 1,000 to tide it over the first year when the community is in the course of construction and little is produced. Such an allowance should be paid out in the form of compensation for labor services provided by the settlers.

The mission has estimated the cash investment outlay in the different types of settlements as follows (in Syrian pounds):

| | Dry farming settlement (120 families) | | Irrigated area settlement (310 families) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Non-mechanized | Mechanized | |
| Housing for farm families | 77,000 | 77,000 | 191,100 |
| Housing and shops for non-farm families | 20,000 | 20,000 | 67,000 |
| Community facilities[a] | 71,000 | 71,000 | 182,000 |
| Draft power, livestock and implements | 318,000 | 514,000[b] | 341,250 |
| Sustenance allowance | 110,000 | 110,000 | 273,000 |
| Total | 596,000 | 792,000 | 1,054,350 |

[a] Including schools, mosques (or churches), community centers, water supply and roads.
[b] Including £S 250,000 for mechanized equipment.

[10] See Annex I, p. 468.

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123 The mission suggests that the state Agricultural Bank finance the housing
146 and means of production (other than mechanized equipment) under
241 loans to be amortized over a 10-year and three- to four-year period respec-
361 tively. The government itself should be responsible for providing the funds necessary for community facilities, mechanized equipment and payment of the sustenance allowance.

123 The mission's calculations indicate that the average farm family should
146 be able to earn a net annual income of around £S 2,000 in the dry-farming
241 communities and of over £S 3,000 in the irrigated-area communities even during the period when loans are being repaid. This should leave a small margin for the payment for land in the dry-farming areas and a substantial margin for the necessary payments for land and water in the irrigated areas. The mission believes it a sound principle to require some payment even for non-irrigated state domain. The price of land, however, should be such that the settler can expect to become a full owner within a reasonable period, e.g., no more than 10 to 15 years.

Certain conditions will need to be enforced in settling peasants on the land. For example, title should not be transferred until all payments have been completed, and in the intervening period the government should reserve the right to remove settlers who prove to be clearly unsuitable or do not till their own land. Even after title has been transferred, the government might well retain for a specified period the right to veto all proposed sales, mortgages or leases, in order to safeguard the fundamental objective of establishing and maintaining independent peasant proprietors.

During the next five years the government will have to undertake the settlement of the Roudj and a portion of the Ghab. For the settlement of Bedouins the mission recommends the establishment of two experimental dry-farming communities, one of which would be mechanized, in the Jezireh. The mission must emphasize, however, that the latter two experiments are bound to fail unless the government allocates to them good land situated in a region with adequate rainfall. Both the Roudj and the Jezireh projects will provide much valuable experience useful in extending the settlement effort. In addition the government might well undertake one project in the Djebel es Smaane northwest of Aleppo and another in the Djebel Druze. The ruins of many once imposing cities testify that the first region flourished from the first to the seventh century of the Christian era, and recent evidence indicates that this prosperity was primarily founded on orchards and vineyards. More recently people have been

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returning to become squatters among the ruins and cultivate patches of stony but fertile soil. Organization of this rather haphazard settlement and the establishment of a planned community based again on orchards and vineyards may prove a worthwhile undertaking. In the Djebel Druze, where living standards are low and emigration is difficult for religious reasons, a similar settlement should be tried, provided a suitable tract of land can be found. Here, too, conditions are favorable for the establishment of orchards and vineyards.

At present responsibility for settlement is dispersed. The Ghab Administration is entrusted with settlement in the Ghab; the Irrigation Service has the task in other newly reclaimed and irrigated areas; and the Ministry of Agriculture has the initiative for the dry-farming areas. The mission strongly recommends that responsibility for planning and coordinating all the work be vested in a single, independent Settlements Administration, which would also discharge certain governmental functions relating to housing, town planning and similar subjects. The settlement program will require a great organizational effort and a staff which only a single agency would be capable of mobilizing. One administration is also much more likely to apply the experience gained in the initial settlement work to subsequent ventures. The mission urges that such an agency be established promptly, so that the necessary planning may be immediately initiated. The assistance of a number of foreign experts will need to be enlisted to carry out the program.

If the four settlements the mission has recommended are established and the Roudj and a portion of the Ghab are settled, the total cost would probably be around £S 10 million. Under the mission's proposals, £S 5.5 million would be financed by the Agricultural Bank, and the balance met directly by the government. With these funds it should be possible to settle some 2,300 families or between 12,000 and 14,000 people.

*Land Reform*

While the settlement of state domain may gradually increase the number of peasant proprietors, Syria will also have to work out policies relating to land ownership and tenancy in the areas already under cultivation. In this connection it should be noted that Article 22 of the 1950 constitution calls for legislation to determine, without retroactive effect, "the maximum area of land that may be owned, exploited and disposed of, according to

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423 districts"; to provide for the forfeiture of land "neglected for a period of
425 time"; to encourage "small and medium properties"; and "to protect the peasant and raise his standard of living".

In recent years several countries have taken steps to break up large estates and distribute them among landless tenants. Where large estates are farmed in small plots by tenants operating with rather primitive methods, the economic advantages resulting from well-managed large-scale exploitation certainly do not accrue. On the contrary, farming by impoverished tenants may be regarded as a social liability and an actual or potential cause of discontent. In the last analysis only the Syrian people acting through their government are competent to determine what course to pursue regarding large landholdings. The mission would only point out that expropriation on a considerable scale would entail large outlays for compensation and would be more disruptive than constructive, unless adequate measures were simultaneously taken to provide new peasant owners with sufficient supplies of seed, draft animals and tools and to guide them in their agricultural practices. Where labor is scarce and land is cultivated on a large scale by machinery, as in the Jezireh, expropriation would manifestly serve no useful purpose and would result, instead, in a substantial reduction in output.

There are, however, certain measures the mission would recommend for serious consideration. One would be to prevent aggravation of the problem by enacting legislation to prohibit individual families who already own a certain amount of land—say, 1,000 hectares—from increasing their holdings still further. Another would be to enforce, as a minimum, the existing legislation, which provides that land not tilled for five years should revert to the state. In cases where land is utilized or exploited in a manner which is not in accordance with the standards prevailing in Syria, the
423 government would be justified in depriving the owner of his land. Finally,
651 the mission suggests that the larger landowners should be more heavily taxed in the interest of raising more money for development and of promoting greater social equity. Income derived from agriculture does not fall at present under any of the existing schedular income taxes. Instead, most agricultural produce brought to market is taxed at 7%. While this tax does not bear heavily on peasants who produce primarily for their own consumption, it is not progressive in its application to landowners or pump owners who sell their share of the output on the market. The mission sug-

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gests, therefore, that this tax be complemented by a new land tax. The rate of such a tax should increase with the size of landholdings, and small holdings should be entirely exempt. The rates must also be in accordance with the yield of the land, but the mission suggests that they be kept rather low (e.g., not more than £S 2-3 per hectare on the average) so that a detailed, complex classification of land in accordance with productivity may be avoided. In another section of this report the mission proposes that the present schedular income taxes be supplemented by a global income tax levied at a moderate rate. In our opinion, income from agriculture should be included in the scope of such a global tax. The ascertainment of income from land is by no means as difficult as is generally supposed.

In addition to taking these steps, the government should pay special attention to the improvement of the lot of tenant farmers. In general, measures should be adopted to increase the tenant's share of the output, to give him greater security of tenure and to make him less dependent on the landlord as a source of credit and supplies.

The economic bargaining power of the landlord vis-à-vis the tenant and of the pump owner vis-à-vis the cultivator is so great that the landlord and pump owner obtain a rather excessive share of the output of the land. It would be desirable to establish a commission to study the various forms of association in the exploitation of agricultural land which prevail in different parts of Syria and to make recommendations designed not only to make these arrangements more equitable but also to put them on a basis which would give the actual cultivator of the land more incentive to improve his agricultural methods. Such a commission could work out the terms of written contracts which would be applicable to various types of association. It could also devise ways of giving greater security of tenure to the tenants. The latter can generally be ousted at will by landlords and the land they receive for cultivation is so frequently reallotted that they acquire no interest in its permanent improvement. Finally, it would be appropriate to consider the establishment of local land tenure commissions to settle, in a manner comparable to settlement of labor conflicts, disputes among the parties sharing in the exploitation of the land.

A number of measures to foster cooperatives, provide more ample credit and establish machinery for assisting the farmer at the village level are recommended elsewhere in this report. It is important that these measures

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for study abroad should be a necessary part of the training of the senior staff.

The findings of research, experimentation and the experiences of farmers give support to extension programs. Much information is already available and should be transmitted to farmers, but more systematic and better coordinated practical research should be the aim in the future. The two functions of research and extension should be coordinated within the Ministry of Agriculture so that each performs its specialized service, in a manner that supplements and complements the other. Research must focus on the key needs and concerns of farmers and anticipate future problems. For instance, one of the emerging needs is to know more about good crop rotation practices, including better use of land now fallow.

Chart 1 indicates the mission's conception of a desirable organizational framework for the agricultural credit and rural development program it has recommended.

## IV LAND TENURE

In Syria, the landowner group is composed of full owners, part owners, debt-encumbered owners, and owners with undetermined title. Owners range from operators of large commercial farms to small subsistence farmers. The tenant group is composed of farmers who rent or make some payment for the use of land, and comprises most of the farmers who live on the land and cultivate it. Most of the large owners do not live permanently on their land but operate through some type of sharecropper system. There are very few cash tenants. The sharecropper usually works under the direction of the landlord or his agent and is dependent upon him for farm supplies and operating capital. Often he contributes toward crop production little but his own and his family's labor. His status is more nearly that of a laborer than of a tenant. A true tenant has rights of occupancy and land use that are protected by law, while the sharecropper is very much subject to the will of the landlord.

In general, it appears that in the rainfed areas the sharecropper receives about 30% of the crop if he provides only his labor, and around 70% if he provides the working capital. In areas sparsely settled he receives a slightly higher percentage of the crop, and in heavily populated areas he may receive somewhat less. On the irrigated lands the sharecropper receives in

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the neighborhood of 20-30% of the crop if he furnishes only his labor, and about one-half of the crop if he provides his own working capital. The distribution of the returns on privately irrigated lands is, however, often much affected by the person who controls the pump.

*Land Ownership*

As in other countries of the Middle East considerable uncertainty attaches to ownership rights in land. By no means all of the cultivated or cultivable land is listed in the official property registers, and titles which are registered are often imprecise or conflicting in stating the boundaries or the area. The validity of many land grants made in the past is also subject to challenge.

By far the greater part of the land unquestionably belongs to the state, if only because most of the land is uncultivable and therefore unutilized and all unoccupied or "dead land" has always in theory belonged to the state. State land has in the past fallen into two categories: "state domain" proper, which is officially registered as belonging to the state, and unoccupied or "dead land" (*mawat*) to which no title exists.

Land other than state domain is held under various traditional forms of ownership including *mulk, waqf, matroukah, amiri* and *mucha'a*. *Mulk* is the only form of absolute ownership and covers only a small proportion of state land. *Waqf* is property held in the form of a religious trust and is not particularly significant as far as agricultural land is concerned. *Matroukah* is land dedicated to public purposes and also has no significance for agriculture. Most land is *amiri*, a type of hereditary leasehold. Ultimate ownership in theory rests with the state which can legally recover *amiri* land if it is not cultivated for five years in succession. The latter right is, however, never exercised, and *amiri* land can be said to be in virtually unqualified private ownership. *Mucha'a* is village land held in common but cultivated in individual family plots periodically reallotted among the holders. This form of tenure has predominated in certain parts of the country such as the Hauran and obviously gives little or no incentive to permanent improvement of the land.

Recognizing that clear and undisputed private landownership is a prerequisite to land improvement, the government has been seeking over many years to terminate the *mucha'a* form of tenure and end the confusion in land titles. *Mucha'a* land is being gradually distributed and converted to

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private ownership, and a cadastral survey has been proceeding for three decades to delimit and determine titles to land. Inadequate funds, insufficient trained personnel and cumbersome procedures have made progress very slow. For instance, the cadastral survey, which is apparently supposed to cover about 7.82 million hectares, had been completed for only 3.54 million acres by the end of 1952. The work was farthest advanced in the provinces of Aleppo, Hama and Homs and least advanced in those of Hassetche, Deir ez Zor, Dera'a and Soueida. At the end of 1952 the government authorized an expedited 27-months' survey for the mohafazat of Hassetche. For the first time, aerial photography is being used to carry out the program and a soil survey is being conducted at the same time. Even here, however, the work, originally scheduled to be completed by the spring of 1955, has fallen behind schedule and is now unlikely to be finished much before the end of 1956.

*Size of Holdings*

An official estimate apparently made for Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners, who made a developmental study of Syria in 1946-47, indicated that of about 6.1 million hectares of privately held land 38% was in holdings of over 100 hectares and 19% in holdings of 10 hectares and less. In the last analysis only the cadastral survey is likely to give more accurate data on the distribution of land. For the 2.2 million hectares of privately owned land covered by the survey up to the end of 1952, the distribution by size of holdings was as follows:

| Classification of holdings (hectares) | Percent of area |
|---|---|
| Small holdings | |
| Less than 1 | 1 |
| 2–5 | 5 |
| 5–10 | 7 |
| Total | 13 |
| Medium holdings | |
| 10–25 | 17 |
| 25–50 | 11 |
| 50–100 | 10 |
| Total | 38 |

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| | |
|---|---|
| Large holdings | |
| 100–500 | 24 |
| 500–1,000 | 9 |
| Over 1,000 | 16 |
| Total | 49 |
| Total all groups | 100% |

This would indicate that 49% of the land area is in holdings of over 100 hectares and 16% in holdings of over 1,000 hectares. These percentages may well be lower when the survey in the mohafazats of Dera'a and Soueida are completed, for these are areas of predominantly small holdings. Large estates are found particularly in the mohafazats of Hama, Homs, Aleppo and Hassetche. Some holdings are known to be in excess of 100,000 hectares. Unfortunately the mission was unable to obtain data on the number of holdings in each of the classifications listed in the above table.

*Land Tenure Policy*

The objectives of a tenure improvement program in Syria in respect to private lands should be: (1) to prevent the further growth of large holdings and promote generally a wider distribution of ownership, while avoiding at the same time excessive fragmentation of already small holdings; (2) to secure a more equitable distribution of farm income among those associated in the cultivation of the land, including the landlord, the cultivator-tenant, the pump-owner and others who have acquired rights in or power over the returns from land; (3) to promote greater security of tenure for the tenant; and (4) to enable the small owner and tenant to become more prosperous and independent by improved methods of production and the introduction of needed economic institutional reforms.

On public domain lands, the principal objectives should be (1) to establish the extent of state domain, particularly of cultivable lands; (2) to reserve state domain suitable for arable farming for gradual distribution to farmer-operators as and when the need arises; (3) in the meanwhile, to permit the exploitation of state domain under medium-term lease arrangements but at adequate rentals; and (4) to take steps to ensure good public land management on state domain.

In the process of settling state lands suitable for development, an im-

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423 portant step accompanying or following the survey should be classification of the land to determine: (1) the inherent land characteristics; (2) present use; (3) use capability; and (4) recommended use by size of operating unit. This information is necessary to carry out a good settlement policy with respect to land use, involving primarily the size of units to be established and recommendations for cropping and land practices to be followed. A sound settlement program should settle good farmers on good land under conditions that afford a reasonable opportunity for success. This is most important in the distribution of state domain land.

It is also desirable that the price to the settler for the land, buildings and the improvements be in line with the productive capacity of the land, and that payments on this indebtedness be related to the time when farm income may be realized. Any repayment made during the first few years will necessarily be small, and might not begin before the third year of settlement. The total charge against a new land settler should not exceed 2½-3½ times the gross annual returns from land. This is equivalent to the payment of an annual rental of 20-25% of the crop produced for a period of 10 to 15 years. As a prospective landowner a settler should be required to maintain and improve his farm, pay taxes, provide for living expenses and enjoy the inducement of an additional income to enable him and his family to improve their standard of living.

The period of repayment should not exceed 10-15 years. A longer period is more hazardous, discouraging, and does not afford proper incentive to land ownership. A 10-year period is preferable.

15: Khadduri S-4 (no date) 1951 MDl Syria MDl



The functions of the Court are: (1) to consider the constitutionality of laws, decrees, and any administrative decisions; (2) to conduct the trial of the President of the Republic and the Ministers; and (3) to examine the validity of elections.

For the purpose of the appointment, promotion, transfer, and discharge of judges or the various courts other than the Supreme Court, a High Council of Judges is provided, composed of the President of the Supreme Court, two members of the Supreme Court, and the highest ranking four judges of the Court of Cassation. The Council is set up to ensure that the judicial authority is kept independent of the influence of the Government.

The Constitution provides, likewise, detailed provisions for the division of the country into administrative units and for local provincial government and municipal administration. It also provides rules for the preparation of the budget and the procedure of its introduction to Parliament, as well as other measures related to financial policy. An interesting provision related to the economic development of the country is the establishment of a Permanent Economic Council for the purpose of formulating plans for the development and exploitation of the economic potentialities of Syria.

Probably the most interesting innovation of the Constitution is its Bill of Rights comprising 28 articles which define with considerable detail the fundamental principles of freedom and the social and economic rights of the individual citizen. The numerous provisions stressing liberty and equality of the individual and the freedom of the press may seem superfluous, but they are deemed worthy of emphasis in view of the authoritarian tendency in the administration since the establishment of the national regime.

Article 21 marks a radical departure from the principle of the existing social-economic system. In this article, property is defined as both "public" and "private"; and the State like the individual may possess property within the limits of the law. As to private ownership, "the method of its possession and disposal shall be specified by law in such a manner as to make it perform its social function." Further, no individual is to be permitted to "utilize his private ownership in a manner inconsistent

15: Khadduri S-4 (no date) 1951 MDI Syria MDI



642 423 with public welfare." All subsoil minerals, solid or liquid, are declared the property of the State; and the State, in the general interest, is permitted to expropriate private property in accordance with a law providing for just compensation. But Article 23 ensures that no "general confiscation" shall be permitted.

The Constitution provides in like manner the way of utilizing the land. It stipulates that land "shall be cultivated and not neglected"; and that should it be left unexploited within a certain period to be specified by law, the right of usufruct is alienated. The Constitution provides, likewise, that "a maximum limit for land ownership shall be prescribed by law," and that small and medium ownership is to be encouraged: "The State shall distribute State lands to peasants to whom land is not available sufficient to their living, against small rents to be repaid in installments." (Article 22.)[22]

642 659 Labor is regarded as "the most basic factor in social life," and is "the right of all citizens." "The State shall provide work to citizens and shall guarantee it by directing and promoting the national economy." (Article 26.) The State undertakes to protect labor and provide legislation for the regulation of wages, hours of labor, allowances, and the improvement of social and health conditions. Trade unions are permitted to be formed within the limits of the law. Forced labor is prohibited except by law aimed at certain specific social and constructional services, and in case of war and emergencies.

642 871 Education is declared a right of every citizen. Elementary education is compulsory and free in all Government schools. Secondary and professional education, though not compulsory, is also free in all Government schools. "The State shall give priority in the budget for the spread and expansion of elementary, rural, and professional education." The aim of education is defined as "the creation of a generation strong in body and mind, full of faith in God, endowed with moral virtues, proud in the

425 [22] On February 15, 1951, the Minister of Agriculture announced a plan for the distribution of 166,000 dunams (app. 41,500 acres) of State land in the Jazirah area among 554 Bedouin families of the Shammar Zor tribe. Each family will receive 300 dunams (75 acres), and each peasant, after paying the State LS 2.5 annually for 3 years, will own his share of the land. The State land is to be distributed among several villages, each village to receive 20,000 dunams (5,000 acres).

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pensated partly by her transit trade in goods and partly by her gold and currencies market. Syria wanted a controlled economy with import restrictions, protection of Syrian industries, and independence from French financial policy, but Lebanon's interest was to encourage all trade movements and to rely on franc support: moreover, the two countries could not agree on the division of customs dues. After years of arguments and negotiations the economic partnership was finally terminated on 14 March 1950 and customs posts were established along the common frontier. Since then agreements have been drawn up despite Syrian reluctance, but little has been achieved towards the re-establishment of economic union. It is therefore necessary to consider the economies of the two countries separately.

## (a) Syria

### *Agriculture*

Over half but less than three-quarters of the cultivable area of Syria is, in fact, under cultivation. Since 1946 there has been a great increase in the number of pumps and tractors in use (there were 300 tractors in 1948 and 1,342 in 1951) but, as the following table shows, the cultivated area can still be extended.

ESTIMATES OF THE USE OF LAND, 1950

| | Syria | | Lebanon | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (*sq. miles*) | *Percentage of Total* | (*sq. miles*) | *Percentage of Total* |
| *Cultivable* | | | | |
| Cultivated under rainfall | 8,400 | 12 | 803 | 20 |
| Cultivated with irrigation | 1,400 | 2 | 115 | 3 |
| *Potentially cultivable* | 14,000 | 20 | 700 | 17 |
| *Uncultivable* | | | | |
| Forests | 1,600 | 2 | 285 | 7 |
| Pasture | 21,000 | 30 | 27 | 1 |
| Desert, mountain and marsh | 23,600 | 34 | 2,085 | 52 |
| Total Area: | 70,000 | 100 | 4,015 | 100 |

(Sources: FAO, *Yearbook of Food and Agricultural Statistics, 1952*; UN, Dept. of Economic Affairs, *Review of Economic Conditions in the Middle East, 1951–2.*)

Some progress in mechanized farming has been made in recent years, but much of the land is tilled as it was 2,000 years ago. The predominant form of land tenure is share-cropping by tenants on estates of large and medium size. Small holdings under 25 acres prevail in areas of intensive cultivation, and at present are estimated to constitute only 15 per cent of the total

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cultivated area. Holdings of 25–250 acres are estimated to take up 33 per cent of the area and holdings over 250 acres 29 per cent. State land is estimated to represent 23 per cent of the total cultivated area. Decrees for the distribution of state lands were issued in 1952: their implementation, at the time of writing, is still under review. Legislation to prevent the subdivision of plots by succession inheritances is also under consideration; at present a four-acre plot may have thirty-seven owners, and its management is profitable only to lawyers.

The approximate acreage and crop and yield of the main products are shown in the following table.

MAIN CROPS

| | *Area* (000 hectares) | | | *Production* (000 metric tons) | | | *Yield* (100 kg. per ha.) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *1950* | *1951* | *1952* | *1950* | *1951* | *1952* | *1950* | *1951* |
| Cotton (lint) | 78 | 217 | 142 | 33 | 49 | 49 | 4·6 | 2·3 |
| Wheat | 992 | 1,037 | 900* | 890 | 510 | 850* | 8·4 | 4·9 |
| Barley | 416 | 344 | 400* | 322 | 155 | 350* | 7·7 | 4·5 |
| Vegetables | 68 | 66 | .. | 47 | 40 | 142 | .. | .. |
| Tobacco† | 10 | 11 | .. | 9 | 9 | .. | 8·7 | .. |
| Rice (paddy) | 7 | .. | .. | 24 | 6 | 6 | 19·3‡ | .. |

.. = not available.

* The Banque de Syrie et du Liban (*Exercice 1952*) quotes the following figures for 1952 (in thousands):
Wheat: area = 1,180, production = 805.
Barley: area = 396, production = 467.

† Including Lebanon (annual production about 2,000–3,000 tons). ‡ 1949.

(SOURCES: FAO, *Yearbook of Food and Agricultural Statistics, 1952* and *Monthly Bulletins of Statistics*, 1953; vegetable figures from Banque de Syrie et du Liban, *Exercice 1952*, Paris, 1953.)

Wheat is the traditional staple crop of Syria and in a normal year a quarter of a million tons can be exported. But the poor harvest of 1951 necessitated wheat imports of about 50,000 tons. The 1952 wheat crop, however, once more increased to over 800,000 tons. Barley is also grown and exported and, though the acreage has diminished somewhat since 1949, the crop is adequate.

In 1950 fortunes were made from cotton which fetched a high price for the abundant harvest. The acreage sown to cotton trebled between 1949 and 1950 and again in 1951. But while in 1950 the cotton yield was high, the 1951 harvest proved disappointing because of drought and attacks of the boll weevil. Despite a fall in cotton acreage in 1952—due chiefly to the downward trend in cotton prices—that year's output was maintained at the 1951 level, thanks largely to better methods

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## SYRIA AND LEBANON

### MAIN CROPS

| | Area (000 hectares) | | Production (000 metric tons) | | Yield (100 kg. per ha.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1951 | 1952 | 1951 | 1952 | 1950 |
| Wheat | 61 | 70 | 43 | 50 | 7·5 |
| Barley | 15 | 20 | 14 | 27 | 11·2 |
| Cotton | 5 | 2 | 1 | .. | .. |
| Tobacco | .. | .. | 3 | 2 | .. |
| Citrus fruit | .. | .. | 78 | 90 | .. |
| Grapes | 21 | .. | 80 | .. | .. |

.. = not available.

(Sources: Banque de Syrie et du Liban, *Enquête 1952* (Paris 1953); except figures for yields, cotton production, and area and production of grapes, all of which have been taken from FAO, *Yearbook of Food and Agricultural Statistics*, 1952.)

There is enough water for land to be used more intensively than in Syria but there is not enough room to grow all that the country needs. Improved methods have increased the yield of cereals per acre, but Lebanon will always have to import wheat. The crop of grapes is nearly double the weight of the wheat harvest and Lebanon exports grapes, wine, and the best quality araq. The citrus exports are high but the growers have not yet established the same name for quality as have the Israelis. Melons, water-melons, apples, onions, and potatoes are also important crops and vegetables are exported as far as the oil towns of Kuwait and Dahran. Cotton and tobacco are also grown in small quantities.

The land is more evenly parcelled out amongst the people in Lebanon than in Syria but, despite the fact that there are many small holdings, there is a general shift from country to town, and Beirut and its immediate neighbourhood hold nearly half of the population. In the coastal regions of intensive cultivation small holdings predominate, while in the plain regions large estates worked by share-croppers are the most prevalent form of land tenure. Some estates owned by rich men are farmed under modern methods and equipment and there is less room for improvement or for expansion in agriculture than in Syria.

### *Industry*

Relative to its size, Lebanon is one of the most industrialized countries in the Middle East area. It is probable that nearly 50,000 persons are so employed, of whom over half are factory workers. However, Lebanese industry has only partly recovered from the loss of the Syrian market and some industries had either to move to Syria or to curtail production. The biggest industries are electricity, which produced 130 million kwh. in 1951, and the Chekka cement factory south of Tripoli, which produced 303,000 tons of cement in 1951. Cotton weaving and

15: Tannous N.G-5 (no date) 1951 M1 Middle East M1
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About two years ago the Government of Saudi Arabia proclaimed its readiness to grant state land to any citizen who undertakes to put it under cultivation. This policy was developed on the basis of the Koranic statement to the effect that land belongs to the one who revives it. It must be remarked in this connection that the religion of Islam is basically for the equitable distribution and utilization of the land resource. Saudi Arabia is an Orthodox Muslim country, regulating its life in accordance with the religious law. This opens the possibility for the development of a form of ownership that is at the same time Islamic and effective.

In the summer of 1949 Col. Husni Za'im of Syria was liquidated through a coup d'état, but not so the reforms he had initiated. The idea of reforming the land tenure system has been kept alive. The government that followed that of Za'im created a committee representing various agencies to study the problem and recommend possible solutions. This activity bore fruit in the form of Article 22 in the new Syrian constitution, which provides, among other things, for (a) encouragement of small and medium land holdings; (b) setting a maximum limit to the size of holdings, but not retroactively; (c) making it obligatory upon the owner to keep his land under cultivation, otherwise he would lose his claim over it; and (d) distributing state land among landless peasants. There are also indications that the present government intends to take effective action in this respect. There is already a plan for the resettlement of peasants on state land in the Homs-Hama areas.

A promising sign in Egypt is the consciousness of the problem that is now shared by government officials and by people in various walks of life, including the peasants themselves. This consciousness has developed as a result of a rapid increase in population, bringing about a tremendous pressure upon the land resource. As mentioned above, this resource is highly concentrated in the hands of the very few, including the state. The landless or near-landless peasant desires strongly a few acres of the coveted precious land.

In response to this tense situation, Egyptian leadership is beginning to take some action. In some cases the government has

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crease the productivity per acre and also to expand the cultivated area per head.

In the Lebanon, however, with its steep hillsides under intensive cultivation, there is a definite pressure on land resources. The limits of intensification appear to have been reached, and a large part of the village population supplements its income by work in the towns, and by remittances from abroad. If the land tenure system in Syria were less oppressive, room might be found on the land for settlers from the Lebanon, but as things are, the standard of living and status of the Lebanese peasant is higher; compared with the Syrian peasant he is a free man, and there is no inducement to leave the Mountain for the underpopulated plains of central or northern Syria.

## LAND TENURE

Corresponding to these different methods of farming, there are different systems of land tenure.[1] In Lebanon individual small ownership is well established, and the pattern of village life, with its broad class of small peasant owners, few large farmers, and a growing class of landless labourers, resembles that of Europe.

In Syria, the greater part of the land is owned by city notables—the ruling class—and cultivated by small share-tenants. Though individual ownership exists in some districts, for instance the Beqa Valley and the oasis of Damascus, the most usual form of landownership in the plain districts of Syria is share-tenancy. The villagers bring their corn to the village threshing floor, and when the grain is threshed the landlord or his agent stands by and takes one-half of the grain. Towards this result he has contributed nothing; all labour, equipment, seeds, livestock, have been supplied by the tenant, so that his share is rent purely for the use of the land. The landlord is almost always an absentee, a city notable who only visits the land to collect rent.

The share taken by the landlord varies from district to district, and also varies with the condition of the land. According to an inquiry made by the French authorities, the usual division of the crop for non-irrigated cereals is 40–50 per cent to the

[1] The information which follows is mainly based on A. Latron, *La Vie rurale en Syrie et au Liban* (Beirut, L'Institut Français de Damas, 1936). The brilliant and profound study by Jacques Weulersse, *Paysans de Syrie et du Proche-Orient*, is an indispensable authority which unfortunately was received only after going to press.

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probably few, of the estates are the properties of old, wealthy families of Ottoman times, which still exist in Lebanon, such as the lands belonging to the families of Arslan, Jumblatt, Chehab, Khazen, but many of these have been broken up by the Moslem laws of inheritance. Other estates have originated from direct grants made by Turkish Sultans to influential politicians, as for example the two very large estates in the Beqa and the Litani valley. Others too were formed at the time of the general registration of property undertaken by the Ottoman Government when chiefs of tribes or villages registered tribal land in their names as their private property. Uncertainty about legal title to land gives the educated classes frequent opportunity for ousting peasant owners, and whole villages have come into the possession of rival groups of city notables, as a result of litigation among the villagers who have sought their assistance in establishing their title.

While the land-tenure system is thus a result of peasant poverty, it also perpetuates poverty by standing in the way of any long-term investment. The high percentage of fallow in Syria suggests a great waste of land resources, and there could certainly be some improvement in yields, even in dry land farming, if green crops were introduced more generally into the rotation. But the share-cropper has little incentive to improve the fertility of the land, since he has no certainty of tenure, and since the landlord will take 50 per cent of any increase. Since the landlords are not as a rule directly interested in farming, they do not themselves undertake long-term improvements in the land.

Three case studies illustrate the ways in which the land-tenure system hinders advance.[1]

One study relates to the large estate of Misherfe, near Homs in central Syria. This is 24,000 acres in extent and includes five villages, with 2,500 inhabitants. It is very extensively cultivated, only one-third of the area, 8,000 acres, being cropped each year. The land is divided into three parts, one with wheat, barley or *qatani* (mixed grain), one ploughed but not sown, and one left fallow. A small area, 200 acres only, is irrigated, though water supplies are sufficient to irrigate much larger areas.

[1] These studies, which were prepared for the M.E.S.C., are not at present available in print.

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000 There are some possibilities of raising yields in dry farming, but they are limited, and the main hope for increasing farm incomes is a better use of water supplies.

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511 The second conclusion is that in every district half or more than half of the population live in extreme poverty, due to the low proportion of land cultivated, low yields, and the unequal distribution of land. In Lebanon, surplus rural population is the major cause of poverty. There is no motive-power making for progress: even richer peasants do not invest, but spend unproductively: the landlords are pure rent-receivers: and the poorer peasants are entangled in a network of debt without hope of escape.

### FRENCH LAND POLICY

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423 In regard to the *mushaa* system, which was widely prevalent at the time the French took over, the French authorities have hastened the process of disintegration. By decrees passed in 1925 and 1926 the periodical re-allotment of holdings (i.e., the *mushaa* custom) was forbidden. Since the work of survey and settlement did not keep pace with the legislative enactment, this law meant an abrupt interference with village custom which contributed to agrarian unrest, particularly in the Hauran, where the *mushaa* custom was general. It appears to have been largely disregarded, and not to have been put into force by the Bureau de Cadastre (the French Survey Office, which is a private concession and not a government department), which undertook the work of land settlement.

M. Duraffourd, the Director of the Bureau de Cadastre, considered that the *mushaa* custom had a real basis in the social life of the country and should not be abolished. Moreover it had often happened in Turkish times that title to land had been granted in divided holdings, but the titles were disregarded by the occupiers of the land, who continued to exchange their shares as before. The Bureau de Cadastre, therefore, when establishing title to land in a *mushaa* village have followed the practice of registering each villager's share in the land as a fraction of the total area, without attaching the title to any specific piece of land. This method tends to preserve the *mushaa* system. When title is registered to definite pieces of land, the Bureau de Cadastre have attempted in some cases to re-group the holdings

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into single units, to form individual farms; but shortage of money limited this process to about 50,000 acres.

About half the area of Syria has been surveyed and title registered by the Bureau de Cadastre. As in Palestine, political unrest made it impossible to survey and register some districts, in particular the Hauran and the Jezira. With this limitation the work of the department appears to have been successful.

*Water-Rights.* One of the great obstacles to carrying out large-scale irrigation schemes is the confusion which prevails about water-rights. According to an unpublished report prepared for M.E.S.C. in 1943 by Professor Addison, one important scheme, the Yamunne project, could not be initiated, because the complicated question of water-rights had not been settled. Since any big advance in agriculture really depends on irrigation, a settlement of water-rights is essential.

The French authorities have apparently been no more successful in dealing with this question than the British authorities in Palestine and Transjordan. A decree was issued by the High Commissioner in June 1925 nationalizing the water supply, and making all sources of water and water-courses public property; but a further decree in 1926 weakened this wise measure, permitting temporary occupation of water-rights for forty years, so that the result of the legislation has been to increase the confusion.

*Control of Irrigation.* There is no uniformity of procedure in controlling irrigation schemes, and no central authority controlling irrigation. There are three chief methods of control quite unrelated to each other. These are:

1. The village community in which water-rights are regulated by custom. This appears to be the prevalent method of control in all the village irrigation schemes, of which there are a very large number. Several villages may share in these schemes, and the distribution of water is established between them by custom, and administered by the village authorities. Each owner of land can claim a share in the total water supply measured as a unit of time, for example, one hour every seven days. This method is beginning to prove unsatisfactory. The big owners almost always control the best

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irrigated land, and village chiefs can frequently be bribed to leave open irrigation ditches so that their land is better watered. This frequently happens, for example, in the Ghuta of Damascus, where there is no unified plan for the irrigation of the district and no authority which can enforce the customary rights.

2. The system under which water is owned collectively, or as *Waqf*, in the northern Beqa.

3. Private ownership by large landowners. This is usual in the Lebanon where there are a number of small private schemes.

These methods of control apply to the smaller schemes. Large-scale schemes have been operated either by:

1. Private concession. Only one relatively large-scale concession is actually in operation, the Nahr Ibrahim (Adonis) scheme.
2. The State. State-controlled works have been carried out by
   (i) authorities directly under the control of the French authorities;
   (ii) authorities directly under the control of the Lebanese Public Works Ministry;
   (iii) Lebanese or Syrian authorities under the control of the Délégation Générale.

There is great need of a central authority to co-ordinate the supply of water. In the south Beqa, for instance, much irrigable land is left unirrigated and much water allowed to run to waste for lack of such an authority.

*State Land.* One of the main reasons for the lack of intensive cultivation in central Syria is that the State lands have never been systematically settled. Very large areas are State domain, that is, land registered as the property of the Turkish Sultan, Abdul Hamid. Under the mandate, this land became the property of the local government. Under the Turks these lands were used for the 'displaced persons' of the old Empire, who were driven out when Turkish territory was lost, but they were still sparsely settled when the French took over.

After the rising of 1925 the French authorities began to settle

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the land. In 1926–31, 182 villages comprising 181,000 hectares were colonized in small properties by 6,000 families. The Government of Latakia compelled large proprietors in the region of Homs to give up their villages in the district of Masyaf in 1929; the land was distributed among the occupying peasants and sold to them at a price to be paid for in ten annual instalments. The village of Jib Ramle was also settled in 1929, in part by occupying peasants, in part by refugee Armenians.

But the French administration did not complete the settlement of these areas. In some regions the Turks settled these lands with nomad tribes, who were themselves averse to cultivation and either rented the land to Alawi villagers or continued to live themselves as nomads on the land without cultivating much of it. Consequently this land is now very sparsely settled. Round Homs there are said to be 2,000 to 4,000 hectares with only 10 per cent of the land cultivated: this is some of the most fertile and best situated land in the country, and could be developed by colonization schemes.

In several respects the French authorities have modified the Turkish system in ways which strengthen the landowners against the cultivators. One of these was the sale of the extensive *Waqf* properties to business enterprises, irrigation concessions, or landowners. Another was the abrogation of the right of ownership acquired by ten years cultivation which benefited the small cultivators in enabling them to acquire new land.

Efforts were made to start co-operative and agricultural credit banks, but these never succeeded in breaking the peasant's indebtedness. Several large-scale irrigation schemes were started, but produced more water than could be used. The educational system did not extend to the villages. Within the framework of the existing system, these reforms did little to raise the standard of the peasants. As a mandatory Power the French relied on the collaboration of the wealthy upper class, that is, on the landowners, and so could make no fundamental reforms in the land system.

### POSSIBILITIES OF DEVELOPMENT

So far as dry land farming is concerned the possibilities of improvement are hampered by the dry summer, which necessitates a long period of fallow. However, it would be possible by

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Within this belt there is a large area of cultivable land still uncultivated, mainly for reasons of shortage of labour, lack of means of communication, and political insecurity. Uncultivated land is generally used for grazing, and in the 'Duck's Bill' the grass grows high enough for hay cutting. At present the cultivated area is some 481,500 hectares (1,188,000 acres), and it is estimated that an area about as large again remains uncultivated.

The population at present numbers 111,300, of which half are Kurds. Owing to its remoteness and unsettled state, there has been no survey and settlement of land title. New land is taken under cultivation under the old Ottoman right by which ownership is acquired if cultivation can be proved for ten consecutive years.

In the Jezira most of the land is held by large cultivators. In the Euphrates province much of the land has until recently been owned by the villagers, but now the land is passing into the hands of city landowners as pump irrigation is introduced (as in Iraq). The pumps and buckets are supplied against payment in kind by the town merchant or moneyed class; wherever irrigation brings more lands under cultivation, the ownership of the extra land is divided equally between the villagers and the suppliers of water.

The system of tenure is the usual share-tenancy; in the Jezira, according to local custom, the landlord takes one-eighth of the crop to pay taxes, and the remainder is shared equally between landlord and cultivator, the proportion being determined by the supply of labour. With the introduction of machinery—there were about thirty tractors in the area in 1942—the division into employer and labourers has developed: the landowner using the tractor on the land and employing wage labour.

Owing to the scarcity of labour, the position of the agricultural labourer in the Jezira area is better than in the rest of Syria. Health conditions, however, are bad: the Kurds suffer from trachoma and villagers in the Kamichlia district from malaria. In the Euphrates region, the position is worse: the agricultural labourer is weak and underfed, living a hand to mouth existence and exploited by all.

Both in the Jezira and in the Euphrates region there is scope

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ment, and the investors, inexperienced in farming and unequipped to deal with adverse weather, lack of water, and heavy insect infestation, obtained low yields. Many lost their own capital and borrowed money. 454 241

Some investors, who realize that their only chance of coming out on their original investment is to continue their operations and even to make additional investments, plan to expand operations. Future investment naturally will depend on current earnings which will be determined by production and world market prices.

Farmers who may be in a position to continue investing in agricultural development out of their own capital, however, will be a small minority. The need for credit will be great.

Limited credit usually is given to tenants by the landlords during the spring and summer, but most farmers need more. In the past, additional production credit has been extended largely by the merchants and moneylenders at rates from 15 to 50 per cent annually. A few large landlords borrow money from banks at rates as low as 7 and 8 per cent, but only against excellent securities. Interest rates to the tenants who have less collateral are usually higher. Merchants are discontinuing the practice of buying cotton before the crop is made at prices from 50 to 70 per cent of the future market price because in many cases the farmers do not make enough cotton to fulfill their contract. 452 426 [455]

The government has sought to meet the need for credit by creating an agricultural bank, but the capital is limited and size and volume of loans are small. In 1951, for instance, the bank loaned a total of only $5 million to 57,000 cultivators. Private groups are said to have loaned as much on cotton in the Jezira alone. 652 452

## LAND TENURE

Land available for cultivation is plentiful, but confused titles, excessive concentration of ownership, and insufficient or restricted use of the state domains hamper development. 423

The government has a major interest in agriculture and the tenure problem. The Ministry of Justice reports that 23 per cent of the farm land is owned by the state and in some of the larger farming areas the percentage runs as high as 69 per cent. There is also a heavy concentration of land in large units owned and operated by a few wealthy landlords, with 29 per cent of the farm land in farms over 250 acres. Most of the large farms in the old agricultural areas are operated on a tenancy system, but many of the farms now being established in the new areas of the Jezira are operated on a day wage basis with mechanical equipment. This is especially true of wheat farms. A strong middle class of farmers owns about one-third of the land in farms from 25 to 250 acres, and many of them cultivate their land with the help of tenants. Only 15 per cent of the farm land is owned in lots less than 25 acres. 423 471 241 [427] [464]

In an effort to encourage landownership, stability of tenure, and an interest in improvement of the land, a law was passed recently under which state lands are to be sold on long-term, easy-payment plans to landless farmers with a limit of 123 acres to a farmer. The plan was designed especially to settle the nomads. The principal areas concerned are the state domains in the valleys of the Euphrates and Kabur Rivers, which were un- 425 471 311 [166]

SYRIA

(Visited 13 - 19 January 1953)

131 162 132 58. The Republic of Syria covers approximately 55,700 square miles and has an estimated population of 2,900,000 (including nomads 3,200,000), Arabic speaking and mainly Moslems. There is at present no problem of over-population. Much of the country is at present rain-fed dry land.

311 312 The total cultivable area is 12,500,000 acres of which about 1/3 is under cultivation. Many irrigation projects have been started or are in contemplation. The systems of irrigation do not expose the peasantry in the same degree as in Egypt to bilharzia and the climate is invigorating for much of the year.

241 231 59. Agriculture and cattle breeding are the principal industries. A recent government decree laid down that land not registered must be put at the disposal of the State, who will sell it at a low price in lots of 50 hectares. The land which is thus to be acquired is State Domain which at various times has been appropriated and cultivated by the big land-owning families. The areas involved are said to be 2.3 million hectares of cultivable land and 3.6 million hectares of grazing.

423 185 The land which is to be redistributed must be exploited within 2 years from the date of purchase and must not be resold, although it may be mortgaged to the Agricultural Bank. The Bank will give financial help for the purchase and development of the land.

60. The scheme has been criticized on the ground that in order to avoid a fall in production from the large estates now being cultivated through private capital and a stop being put to the further exploitation of hitherto uncultivated land, the Government will require to make provision for the supply of capital and expert advice to new peasant owners. A scheme for the drainage of a considerable tract in the Jezirah area, known as the Ghab Swamp, is being drawn up as a result of a survey of the area by a foreign firm of engineers. This will also require large capital expenditure.

61. The financing of land redistribution schemes is outside the scope of our mission as is the furnishing of expert advice on new agricultural methods for the more successful exploitation of small estates, except in so far as agricultural extension services can be combined with health and other services appropriate to community welfare organization.

62. The possibility of the Syrian Government's applying for outside technical assistance for any of the above-mentioned purposes is a matter of high policy which we did not feel justified in discussing with the officials whom we had occasion to meet during our visit to Damascus.

647 659 185 63. Dr. Joukhadar, the Director of Labour and Social Affairs, gave the mission the text of a project law (Appendix IV) that had been drafted in his department for establishing rural community centres, somewhat on the lines of those that exist in Egypt.

64. The Decree contemplates that in each province a model centre be established to provide all requisite economic, health, cultural, social and administrative services this being "the only institution that can undertake all the responsibilities and guarantee the success of a programme of village improvement which does not involve

Since water supplies are precisely known and are constant throughout the year due to the regulating barrage of Homs Lake, it is possible to calculate exactly the quantity of water each hectare shall receive. This quantity is established at 0 liters 20 seconds per hectare. 312 804

The total rotation period consists of seven days, and each hectare of irrigated land receives every week about 01.20 x 60 x 60 x 24 x 7 or 121 $m^3$. More detailed sub-divisions are foreseen. The irrigation service determines the duration of the water turns. The official time is that shown by the town hall clock of Homs. This system, however, is complex and needs a qualified staff of engineers, controllers and canal guards. It is still the exception in Syria.

**Water Rights in Palmyra**

The district of Palmyra receives its water from deep thermal and surface springs. The water is transported by underground canals (foggaras) which have existed since Roman times and which are necessary to prevent evaporation due to the dryness of the air at Palmyra. They vary from two to six kilometers in length. 312

***Water Distribution***

This is on a time basis, rotation turns depending on the supply, the number of gardens which are to be watered and the number of persons entitled to water. In Palmyra the turns vary from 12 days in the summer to 18 days in the winter. 312 805

***Water Rights***

These may be sold. The origin of the water titles is lost in history due to the antiquity of the hydraulic works. 312 423

Since there was no effective government during the last century, water became the property of third parties independently of land ownership. Toward the end of the century the government received no taxes from Palmyra and ceded the main thermal spring to a certain El-Hassuan of the Sued family who lived at Homs and to whom persons drawing water paid 80 piasters per hour of watering. For a long time, water rights were the only type of communal property and

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measured the financial well-being of the community.

The number of owners of water rights increased in the course of time as the conveyance of titles and the inheritance of rights increased. By 1922, two-thirds of the village owned water rights, with the remaining one-third having to purchase such rights.

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In 1923, according to G. Carle, 1/ the time turns were calculated by means of an hour glass which required almost one hour (actually 52 minutes) to empty, a special person being appointed to calculate the time of the turns.

## TUNISIA

### Water Rights at Tozeur 2/

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This oasis derives its water from one wadi and two springs. The water is first divided by a horizontally-placed trunk of a palm tree laid perpendicular to the current and notched with markings equal in number to the desired divisions of water. Further subdivisions are made for secondary redistribution. These vary greatly in number because they can be changed by arrangements made between the persons entitled to water rights following the sale, exchange or inheritance thereof. Only the main divisions of the wadi water turns, up to the twenty-first turn, are fixed, and they are the basis of the entire water distribution system.

### *Water Distribution*

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The system used is based on a time schedule. The unit of time for the distribution (*gadous*) corresponds to the time required for a vase full of water, pierced with holes at the bottom, to be emptied (five minutes or one-twelfth of an hour). The hour is also often calculated from the length of a man's shadow which is measured in feet.

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1/Carle, G., L'Hydraulique Agricole et Industrielle en Syrie.
2/Masselot, F. "Les Dattiers des Oasis du Djerid." Bulletin de la Direction Générale de l'Agriculture, du Commerce, et de la Colonisation de la Régence de Tunis, pp. 137-142.

of agriculture are the present forms of land tenure. The proportion of large- and small-scale proprietors is not accurately known, but at least one half of the total farm acreage is owned by wealthy, and often absentee, landlords, and worked according to the share-tenancy system. In many northern districts, particularly in Latakia and Al Jazira provinces, the proportion is probably closer to 70 to 80 per cent. Communal ownership by tribes or villages is also common in some areas. The constitution of Syria provides for the creation of a land-owning peasantry through the redistribution and the sale of state lands, but as yet the percentage of independent farmers is relatively small. Many tenant families and agricultural laborers live at subsistence levels under conditions of extreme poverty. Within recent years attempts have been made to encourage the settlement of the Bedouin tribes. Some now live in permanent villages, where they combine cultivation of cereals with the raising of sheep, migrating seasonally with their flocks in search of pasturage.

Wheat is the principal crop. Barley, maize and other cereals are also grown, especially in the areas of Homs, Hama, Hauran and Al Jazira. Olives, fruits and vegetables are important products on the oasis around Damascus and in the coastal region. Cotton is cultivated in Latakia, Aleppo and Al Jazira provinces, while tobacco flourishes in some sections of Latakia. Other industrial crops include sugar cane, sugar beets, sesame, castor oil beans and hemp. Sheep and goats are abundant in all parts of the country, but cattle are found chiefly in the coastal highlands, on the Damascus oasis and in the Hauran region in the southwest. Limited programs for the improvement of methods of farming and animal husbandry are undertaken by the veterinary and the agricultural services of the government. Four agricultural schools are operated by the Ministry of Agriculture—near Latakia, Hama, Aleppo and Damascus. In the Damascus region, the Near East Foundation

311 by planting forage crops, and by increasing the use of fertilizers and improved seeds. 1/ The Government is planning to increase its distribution of selected wheat and other seeds, to expand its agricultural schools and its student missions to foreign universities, and to intensify the activity of its experimental stations and its extension services.

654 241 Among the obstacles to expansion of output are high production costs, owing to shortage of labour in certain areas and to high fuel prices and maintenance charges for machinery, and also high transport costs. 2/ Various measures are being taken to improve communications, provide storage and reduce the purchase and operating costs of agricultural machinery. 3/

241 422 Another great obstacle to agricultural development is the system of land tenure. In 1947 it was officially estimated that of 6.1 million hectares of privately owned land, 38 per cent was in holdings of over 100 hectares, 43 per cent in holdings of 10 to 99 hectares and 19 per cent in holdings of under 10 hectares. 4/ The greater part of large holdings is rented on short leases to sharecroppers, whose poverty and insecurity make it difficult for them to improve methods and increase output. The Government is preparing a law regulating relations between landlords and tenants and between farmers and labourers. 5/ In 1952 and 1953 decrees were passed regarding the distribution of lands in the State domain to cultivators with small farms and the expropriation of occupied areas on such land in excess of a certain figure. 6/ This land was to be available for cultivation by farmers, in lots of 10 hectares of irrigated or 50 hectares of non-irrigated land, on very generous terms. A start has been made in distributing land in El Jezira to landless farmers and nomads; by March 1954 some 25,000 hectares had been distributed.

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1/ It is estimated that the yield of wheat could be fairly easily raised by 60 to 70 per cent and that of barley by 50 to 60 per cent. The discrepancy between the average yield of olives, 20 kilogrammes per tree, and that of high yielding trees, 50 to 60 kilogrammes, also points to possibilities in that field; it is, moreover, believed that the average oil content of olives could be raised from 11.5 per cent to 15 per cent (unpublished study by the Ministry of National Economy).

2/ In 1953, transport costs of a ton of barley from El Jezira to Latakia were £S 50, a figure equal to the cost of production. High transport costs also greatly raise the price of petroleum products used in agriculture.

3/ Ministry of Agriculture, "A Report on the Development of Agricultural Production and Marketing in Syria" (mimeographed document, Damascus, 1954).

4/ By the end of 1954 half the area of Syria had been surveyed; the corresponding figures within that area were 49 per cent, 38 per cent and 13 per cent. Conditions vary greatly: in Damascus, Latakia, Jebal Druze and Hauran provinces, small and medium properties prevail; in the Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Jezira and Euphrates provinces large properties and State domain account for the greater part of the land.

5/ Ministry of Agriculture, op cit.

6/ This was fixed, in the 1952 decree, at 150 hectares in the Jezira, Euphrates and desert areas and 50 hectares in other parts of Syria. In 1953 the limit was raised to 200 hectares, irrespective of location.